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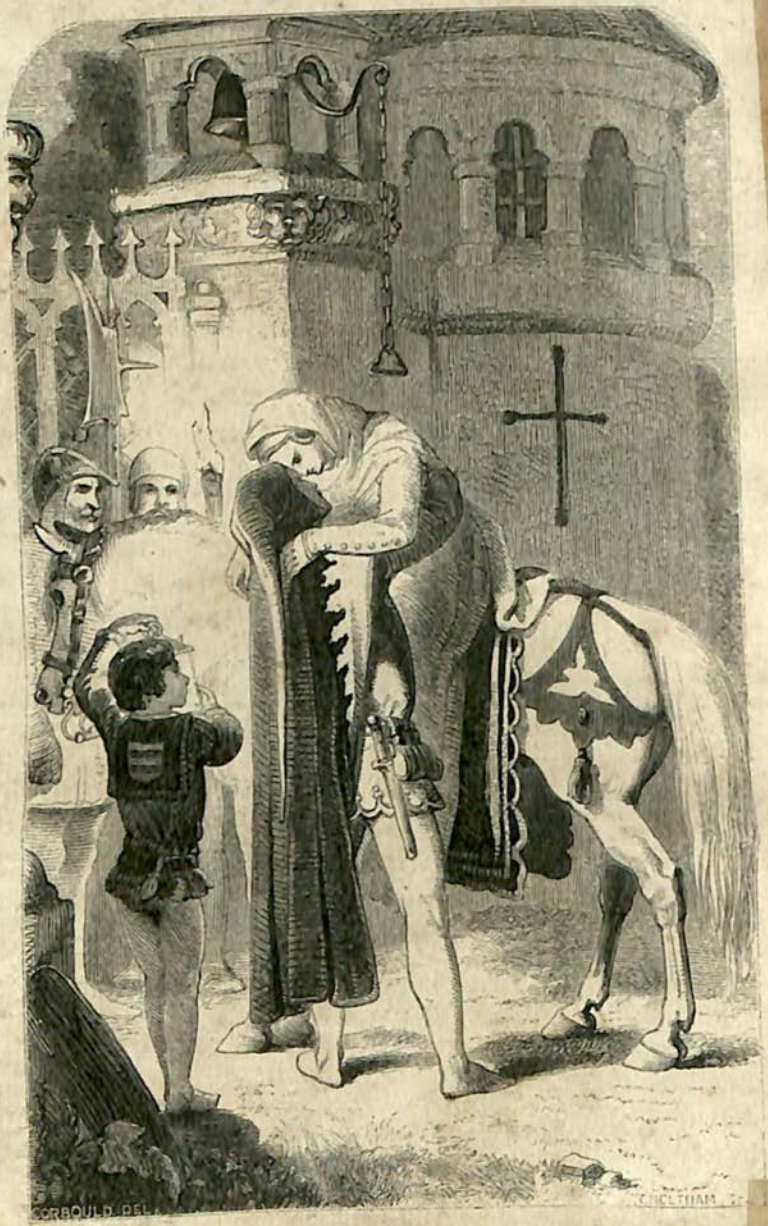

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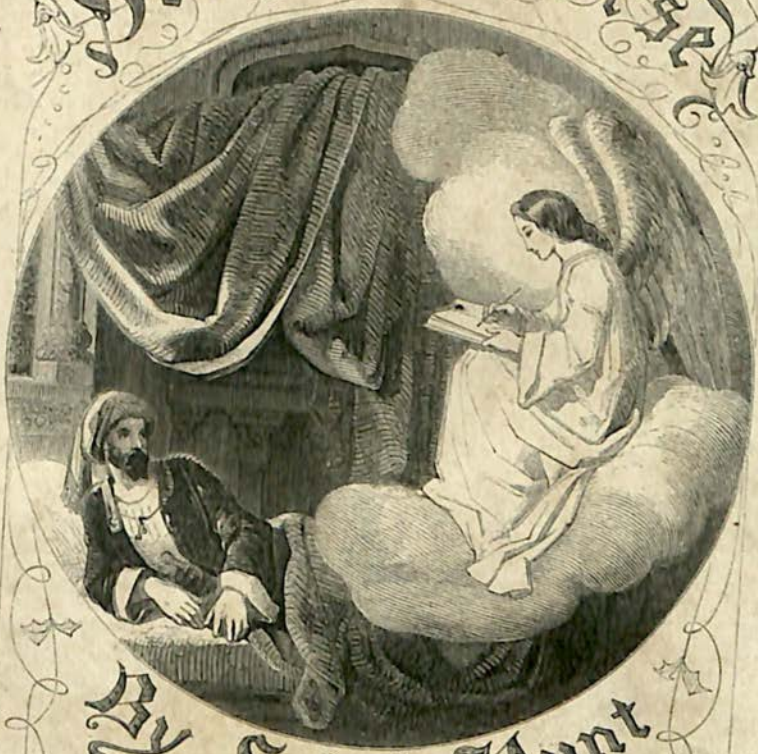
Stories in Verse



By Leigh Hunt

LONDON
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1855

STORIES IN VERSE.

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BY

LEIGH HUNT.

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TO

HIS GRACE THE DUKE OF DEVONSHIRE, K.G.

ETC. ETC.

A NAME SYNONYMOUS WITH TASTE AND BENEFICENCE; THE PRINCELIEST REPRESENTATIVE OF AN EVER PRINCELY HOUSE; THE LANDLORD BELOVED OF HIS TENANTS, BOTH IN ENGLAND AND IN IRELAND; THE FRIEND OF HONEST ADVERSITY, NOTWITHSTANDING DIFFERENCES OF OPINION; THE DISCERNER AND RAISER OF MERIT IN HUMBLE STATION; THE ADORNER OF HIS COUNTRY WITH BEAUTIFUL GARDENS, AND WITH THE FAR-FETCHED BOTANY OF OTHER CLIMATES; ONE, OF WHOM IT MAY BE SAID, WITHOUT POETICAL EXAGGERATION, AND EVEN WITHOUT METAPHOR, THAT HIS FOOTSTEPS MAY BE TRACED IN FLOWERS, AND THAT HE HAS MADE THE HOUSES OF THE POOR TO SMILE;—THESE PRODUCTIONS OF AN IMPERFECT BUT ZEALOUS PEN, WHICH ASPIRES TO ASSIST

IN DIFFUSING A LOVE OF THE GRACES AND GENEROSITIES THAT SWEETEN AND EXALT HUMANITY, ARE INSCRIBED, WITH EVERY SENTIMENT OF GRATITUDE, BY

HIS GRACE'S

MOST OBLIGED,

AND MOST AFFECTIONATE HUMBLE SERVANT,

LEIGH HUNT.

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PREFACE,

CONTAINING REMARKS ON THE FATHER OF ENGLISH NARRATIVE POETRY; ON THE ILL-UNDERSTOOD NATURE OF HEROIC VERSE; ON THE NECESSITY, EQUALLY ILL-UNDERSTOOD, OF THE MUSICAL ELEMENT IN POETRY TO POETRY IN GENERAL; AND ON THE ABSURDITY OF CONFINING THE NAME OF POETRY TO ANY ONE SPECIES OF IT IN PARTICULAR.

As this book, in issuing from the house of Messrs. Routledge, acquires a special chance of coming under the cognizance of travellers by the railway, I have pleased myself with fancying, that it gives me a kind of new link, however remote like the rest, with my great master in the art of poetry; that is to say, with the great master of English narrative in verse, the Father of our Poetry itself, Chaucer.

Nay, it gives me two links, one general, and one particular; for as Chaucer's stories, in default of there being any printed books and travelling carriages in those days, were related by travellers to one another,

and as these stories will be read, and (I hope) shown to one another, by travellers who are descendants of those travellers, (see how the links thicken as we advance!) so one of Chaucer's stories concerned a wonderful Magic Horse; and now, one of the most wonderful of all such horses will be speeding my readers and me together to all parts of the kingdom, with a fire hitherto unknown to any horse whatsoever.

How would the great poet have been delighted to see the creature!—and what would he not have said of it!

I say "creature," because though your fiery Locomotive is a creation of man's, as that of the poet was, yet as the poet's "wondrous Horse of Brass" was formed out of ideas furnished him by Nature, so, out of elements no less furnished by Nature, and the first secrets of which are no less amazing, has been formed this wonderful Magic Horse of Iron and Steam, which, with vitals of fire, clouds literally flowing from its nostrils, and a bulk, a rushing, and a panting like that of some huge antediluvian wild beast, is now heard and seen in all parts of the country, and in most parts of civilized Europe, breaking up the old grounds of

alienation, and carrying with it the seeds of universal brotherhood.

Verily, something even of another, but most grating link, starts up out of that reflection upon the poet's miracle; for the hero who rode his horse of brass made war with Russia; and we Englishmen, the creators of the Horse of Iron, are warring with the despot of the same barbarous country, pitting the indignant genius of civilization against his ruffianly multitudes.

> "At Sarra, in the land of Tartariè,
> There dwelt a king that warriëd Russiè,
> Through which there diëd many a doughty man."

Many a doughty man, many a noble heart of captain and of common soldier,* has perished in this new war against the old ignorance;—an ignorance, that by its sullen persistence in rejecting the kindly advice of governments brave and great enough to be peaceful, forced the very enthusiasts of peace (myself among the number) into the conviction, that out of hatred and loathing of war itself, war must be made upon him.

* This passage was written before one to similar purport, which is quoted further on.

If a lunatic will not put down his sword, and there is no other mode of restraining him, the sword must put down the lunatic.

May there be such a tale to tell of him, as shall surpass in its results the most compensating terminations of story-books, and even the marvels of the affecting heroism with which his multitudes have been overthrown! I am not sure that the friendship which the war has occasioned between France and England is not alone sufficient to pay for it; yet war is so atrocious an evil, and those who personally and mentally suffer by it have alone such a right to the casting votes in its question, that all who sit at home by their firesides in safety and in comfort ought finally to contemplate nothing but its extinction. Gather those votes on fields of battle, on fields after the battle, in hospitals, in bereaved homes, in sorrowing and sicklied generations, and then talk of "opinions" on the subject.

How can the man Nicholas lie in his bed, and think of the miseries, in body and in soul, which he inflicts on millions of his fellow-creatures!

But he talks of "God!" and when such a man talks of God, the case becomes hopeless. Assassins talk so.

Massacrers of Protestant and of Papist talked so. His ancestors talked so, when they slew one another; and other murderers talked so, when they slew others of the ancestors. The strangulations by which Nicholas's father and grandfather, and some think even his brother Alexander perished, were justified by such talk. Will nothing teach him the peril of it? Are "instruments in the hands of Providence" never chucked away into corners, and treated with the greatest contempt?

But I must not be forgetting story for history.

Let me take this opportunity of recommending such readers as are not yet acquainted with Chaucer, to make up for their lost time. The advice is not to my benefit, but it is greatly to theirs, and loyalty to him forces me to speak. The poet's "old English" is no difficulty, if they will but believe it. A little study would soon make them understand it as easily as that of most provincial dialects. Chaucer is the greatest narrative poet in the language; that is to say, the greatest and best teller of stories, in the understood sense of that term. He is greatest in every respect, and in the most opposite qualifications; greatest in

pathos, greatest in pleasantry, greatest in character, greatest in plot, greatest even in versification, if the unsettled state of the language in his time, and the want of all native precursors in the art, be considered; for his verse is anything but the rugged and formless thing it has been supposed to be; and if Dryden surpassed him in it, not only was the superiority owing to the master's help, but there were delicate and noble turns and cadences in the old poet, which the poet of the age of Charles the Second wanted spirituality enough to appreciate.

There have been several Chaucers, and Helps to Chaucer, published of late years. Mr. Moxon has printed his entire works in one double-columned large octavo volume; Messrs. Routledge have published the *Canterbury Tales* in a smaller volume, with delicate illustrations by Mr. Corbould, the best (as far as I am aware) that ever came from his pencil; and there is a set of the poet's works now going through the press, more abundant than has yet appeared in commentary and dissertation, in Robert Bell's *Annotated Edition of the English Poets*,—the only collection of the kind in the language, though it has so long been a desideratum.

Chaucer's country disgraced itself for upwards of a century by considering the Father of its Poetry as nothing but an obsolete jester. Even poets thought so, in consequence of a prevailing ignorance of nine-tenths of his writings, originating in the gross tastes of the age of Charles the Second. There are passages, it is true, in Chaucer, which for the sake of all parties, persons of thorough delicacy will never read twice; for they were compliances with the licence of an age, in which the court itself, his sphere, was as clownish in some of its tastes as the unqualified admirers of Swift and Prior are now; and the great poet lamented that he had condescended to write them. But by far the greatest portion of his works is full of delicacies of every kind, of the noblest sentiment, of the purest, most various, and most profound entertainment.

Postponing, however, what I have to say further on the subject of Chaucer, it becomes, I am afraid, a little too obviously proper, as well as more politic, to return, in this Preface, to the book of the humblest of his followers.

I have taken occasion from this collection of my narrative poems to reprint the *Story of Rimini* ac-

cording to its first size and treatment. I have done this in compliance not only with my own judgment, but with that (as far as I could ascertain it) of the majority of my readers. The refashionment of the poem was always an unwilling, and I now believe was a mistaken concession, to what I supposed to be the ascertained facts of the story and the better conveyance of the moral. I have since discovered that there are no ascertained facts which disallow my first conceptions of either; and it is with as much pleasure as a modest sense of the pretensions of my performance will allow, that I restore those passages relating to the sorrows of the wife, and to the fatal conflict of the brothers, which have been honoured with the tears of some of the manliest as well as tenderest eyes.

The occasional alterations or additions which have been made in the context, I hope for the better, are only such as might naturally suggest themselves to an author while giving a republication its last corrections.

The few remarks which it seemed proper to make on the other stories will be found accompanying them as notes or introductions.

I have not considered as stories those pieces of fancy

which, however related as such, could, under no circumstances, be supposed to be matters of fact. These, such as *Captain Sword and Captain Pen*, the *Feast of the Poets*, *Blue Stocking Revels*, the *Fancy Concert*, and many other pieces which have also been never before collected, will appear in a subsequent volume, containing the whole of the author's *Miscellaneous Poems*, should the sale of the present volume render it advisable. And the *Miscellaneous Poems* would be followed by a collection of *Dramas*, partly also hitherto unpublished; thus completing the whole of the author's productions in verse.

The stories are put in the order in which they were written; partly, because this mode of arrangement is easiest as well as best, where it interferes with no classification; and partly, because it enables readers who are curious on such points to see the progress of an author's style, his changes from one manner to another, or his modifications of the manner that may be peculiar to himself. I do not assume that the object of such a curiosity must needs be commensurate with it in point of worth.

When I wrote the *Story of Rimini*, which was

between the years 1812 and 1815, I was studying versification in the school of Dryden. Masterly as my teacher was, I felt, without knowing it, that there was a want in him, even in versification; and the supply of this want, later in life, I found in his far greater master, Chaucer; for though Dryden's versification is noble, beautiful, and so complete of its kind, that to an ear uninstructed in the metre of the old poet, all comparison between the two in this respect seems out of the question, and even ludicrous, yet the measure in which Dryden wrote not only originated, but attained to a considerable degree of its beauty, in Chaucer; and the old poet's immeasurable superiority in sentiment and imagination, not only to Dryden, but to all, up to a very late period, who have written in the same form of verse, left him in possession of beauties, even in versification, which it remains for some future poet to amalgamate with Dryden's in a manner worthy of both, and so carry England's noble heroic rhyme to its pitch of perfection.

Critics, and poets too, have greatly misconceived the rank and requirements of this form of verse, who

have judged it from the smoothness and monotony which it died of towards the close of the last century, and from which nothing was thought necessary for its resuscitation but an opposite unsystematic extreme. A doubt, indeed, of a very curious and hitherto unsuspected, or at least unnoticed nature, may be entertained by inquirers into the musical portion of the art of poetry (for poetry is an art as well as a gift); namely, whether, since the time of Dryden, any poets whatsoever, up to the period above alluded to (and very few indeed have done otherwise since then), thought of versification as a thing necessary to be studied at all, with the exceptions of Gray and Coleridge.

The case remains the same at present; but such assuredly was not the case either with Dryden himself, or with any of the greater poets before him, the scholarly ones in particular, such as Spenser, Milton, and their father Chaucer, who was as learned as any of them for the time in which he lived, and well acquainted with metres, French, Latin, and Italian.

Poets less reverent to their art, out of a notion that the gift, in their instance, is of itself sufficient for all

its purposes, (which is much as if a musician should think he could do without studying thorough-bass, or a painter without studying drawing and colours,) trust to an ear which is often not good enough to do justice to the amount of gift which they really possess; and hence comes a loss, for several generations together, of the whole musical portion of poetry, to the destruction of its beauty in tone and in movement, and the peril of much good vitality in new writers. For proportions, like all other good things, hold together; and he that is wanting in musical feeling where music is required, is in danger of being discordant and disproportionate in sentiment, of not perceiving the difference between thoughts worthy and unworthy of utterance. It is for this reason among others, that he pours forth "crotchets" in abundance, not in unison with his theme, and wanting in harmony with one another.

There is sometimes a kind of vague and (to the apprehensions of the unmusical) senseless melody, which in lyrical compositions, the song in particular, really constitutes, in the genuine poetical sense of the beautiful, what the scorner of it says it falsely and

foolishly constitutes—namely, a good half of its merit. It answers to variety and expression of tone in a beautiful voice, and to "air," grace, and freedom in the movements of a charming person. The Italians, in their various terms for the beautiful, have a word for it precisely answering to the first feeling one has in attempting to express it—*vago*,—vague; something wandering, fluctuating, undefinable, undetainable, moving hither and thither at its own sweet will and pleasure, in accordance with what it feels. It overdoes nothing and falls short of nothing; for itself is nothing but the outward expression of an inward grace. You perceive it in all genuine lyrical compositions, of whatever degree, and indeed in all compositions that sing or speak with true musical impulse, in whatsoever measure, in the effusions of Burns, of Ben Jonson, of Beaumont and Fletcher, of Allan Ramsay, of Metastasio, of Coleridge; and again in those of Dryden, of Spenser, of Chaucer, of Ariosto; in poems however long, and in passages however seemingly unlyrical; for it is one of the popular, and I am afraid, generally speaking, critical mistakes, in regard to rhymed verse, that in narrative and heroic poems there is nothing

wanting to the music, provided the line or the couplet be flowing, and the general impression not rude or weak; whereas the best couplet, however admirable in itself and worthy of quotation, forms but one link in the chain of the music to which it belongs. Poems of any length must consist of whole strains of couplets, whole sections and successions of them, brief or prolonged, all as distinct from one another and complete in themselves, as the *adagios* and *andantes* of symphonies and sonatas, each commencing in the tone and obvious spirit of commencement, proceeding through as great a variety of accents, stops, and pauses, as the notes and phrases of any other musical composition, and coming at an equally fit moment to a close.

Enough stress has never yet been laid on the analogies between musical and poetical composition. All poetry used formerly to be sung; and poets still speak of "singing" what they write. Petrarch used to "try his sonnets on the lute;" that is to say, to examine them in their musical relations, in order to see how they and musical requirement went together; and a chapter of poetical narrative is called to this day a canto, or chant. Every distinct section or paragraph

of a long poem ought to form a separate, interwoven, and varied melody; and every very short poem should, to a fine ear, be a still more obvious melody of the same sort, in order that its brevity may contain as much worth as is possible, and show that the poet never forgets the reverence due to his art.

I have sometimes thought that if Chaucer could have heard compositions like those of Coleridge's *Christabel*, he might have doubted whether theirs was not the best of all modes and measures for reducing a narrative to its most poetic element, and so producing the quintessence of a story. And for stories not very long, not very substantial in their adventures, and of a nature more imaginary than credible, so they might be. But for narrative poetry in general, for epic in particular, and for stories of any kind that are deeply to affect us as creatures of flesh and blood and human experience, there is nothing for a sustained and serious interest comparable with our old heroic measure, whether in blank verse or rhyme, in couplet or in stanza. An epic poem written in the *Christabel*, or any other brief lyrical measure, would acquire, in the course of perusal, a comparative tone of levity, an air of too great an

airiness. The manner would turn to something like not being in earnest, and the matter resemble a diet made all of essences. We should miss *pièces de resistance*, and the homely, but sacred pabulum of "our daily bread." You could as soon fancy a guitar put in place of a church organ, as an *Iliad* or *Paradise Lost* written in that manner. You would associate with it no tone of Scripture, nothing of the religious solemnity which Chaucer has so justly been said to impart to his pathetic stories. When poor Griselda, repudiated by her husband, and about to return to her father's cottage, puts off the clothes which she had worn as the consort of a great noble, she says,—

"My lord, ye wot that in my father's place,
Ye did me strip out of my poorě weed,
And richěly me cladden of your grace.
To you brought I nought ellěs, out of dreed, [*else* *doubt*
But faith, and nakedness, and maidenheed;
And here again my clothing I restore,
And eke my wedding-ring for evermore.

The remnant of your jewels ready be
Within your chamber, dare I safely sayn; [*say*
'Naked out of my father's house (quoth she)
I came, and naked must I turn again.'"*

* The spelling is modernized in the quotations which I have made from Chaucer in this Preface, in order that while producing

This quotation from the Bible would have been injured by a shorter measure.

Griselda, in words most proper and affecting, but which cannot so well be quoted, apart from the entire story, goes on to say, that she must not deprive of every one of its clothes the body which had been made sacred by motherhood. She tells the father of her children, that it is not fit she should be seen by the people in that condition.

—— "Wherefore I you pray,
Let me not like a worm go by the way."

This is one of the most imploring and affecting lines that ever were written. It is also most beautifully

samples of his beauties, no baulk may be given to a ready perception of them on the part of readers unacquainted with him in print. It is best, doubtless, to become intimate with Chaucer in his own spelling, for many reasons, more than philological; and it is so easy to do this with a little painstaking, that the charge of the reverse is really a thing to be ashamed of. But in a first introduction, it is desirable to put a visitor at his ease.

Readers who may wish for as long a first visit of this kind as possible, will find it indulged in the modernized spelling of Mr. Cowden Clarke's *Riches of Chaucer*, which is an admirable selection of all the best things in the great man, to the exclusion of what the licence of his times has rendered not so proper to be read.

modulated, though not at all after the fashion of the once all in all "smooth" couplet. But the masterly accents throughout it, particularly the emphasis on "worm," would have wanted room, and could have made no such earnest appeal, in a measure of less length and solemnity.

Irony itself gains by this measure. There is no sarcasm in *Hudibras*, exquisite as its sarcasm is, comparable for energy of tone and manner with Dryden's denunciation (I do not say just denunciation) of every species of priest. I allude to the last four lines of the following passage:—

> "Thus worn, or weaken'd, well or ill content,
> Submit they must to David's government,
> Impoverish'd, and depriv'd of all command,
> Their taxes doubled as they lost their land,
> And what was harder yet to flesh and blood,
> Their gods disgrac'd, and burnt like common wood.
> This set the heathen priesthood in a flame;
> For priests of all religions are the same.
> *Of whatsoe'er descent their godhead be,*
> *Stock, stone, or other homely pedigree,*
> *In his defence his servants are as bold,*
> *As if he had been born of beaten gold.*"

It is worth the while of a student in versification to consider those four lines. They are perfect in music,

expression, and force. The last, in particular, is a model, both for the image and the treatment; the image new, apposite, and surprising; the place in which it is put giving musical fulness to the cadence; its utterance bold, strong, and beautiful to the last degree, both of melody and power. The *b's* beat it as if it was on an anvil; as if the gold they speak of were under their hammers; and the variety and *toning* of the vowels gives sweetness to the *bangs*. Mark the variety of accent which the poet has put into the space of four lines, and the strength which the slight sound on the last syllable of *pedigree* gives to the word *bold*, in the line ensuing:

> " Of whatsoe'er descent their gòdhead be,
> Stòck, stòne, or òther hòmely pèdigree,
> In his defence his servants are as bòld,
> As if he had been bòrn of bèaten gòld."

I have dwelt more than is customary on this musical portion of the subject of poetry, for two reasons: first, because, as I have before intimated, it has a greater connexion than is commonly thought, both with the spiritual and with the substantial portions of the art; and second, because, as I have asserted, and am prepared to show, versification, or the various mode of

uttering that music, has been neglected among us to a degree which is not a little remarkable, considering what an abundance of poets this country has produced.

England, it is true, is not a musical country; at any rate not yet, whatever its new trainers may do for it. But it is a very poetical country, *minus* this requisite of poetry; and it seems strange that the deficit should be corporately, as well as nationally characteristic. It might have been imagined, that superiority in the one respect would have been accompanied by superiority in the other;—that they who excelled the majority of their countrymen in poetical perception, would have excelled them in musical. Is the want the same as that which has made us inferior to other great nations in the art of painting? Are we geographically, commercially, statistically, or how is it, that we are less gifted than other nations with those perceptions of the pleasurable, which qualify people to excel as painters and musicians? It is observable, that our poetry, compared with that of other countries, is deficient in animal spirits.

At all events, it is this ignorance of the necessity of the whole round of the elements of poetry for the pro-

duction of a perfect poetical work, and the non-perception, at the same time, of the two-fold fact, that there is no such work in existence, and that the absence of no single element of poetry hinders the other elements from compounding a work truly poetical of its kind, which at different periods of literature produce so many defective and peremptory judgments respecting the exclusive right of this or that species of poetry to be called poetry. In Chaucer's time, there were probably Chaucerophilists who would see no poetry in any other man's writing. Sir Walter Raleigh, nevertheless, who, it might be supposed, would have been an enthusiastic admirer of the Knight's and Squire's Tales, openly said, that he counted no English poetry of any value but that of Spenser. In Cowley's time, "thinking" was held to be the all in all of poetry: poems were to be crammed full of thoughts, otherwise intellectual activity was wanting; and hence, nothing was considered poetry, in the highest sense of the term, that did not resemble the metaphysics of Cowley. His "language of the heart," which has survived them, went comparatively for nothing. When the Puritans brought sentiment into discredit, nothing was con-

sidered comparable, in any species of poetry, with the noble music and robust sensuous perception of Dryden. Admirable poet as he was, he was thought then, and long afterwards, to be far more admirable,—indeed, the sole

—— "Great high-priest of all the Nine."

Then "sense" became the all in all; and because Pope wrote a great deal of exquisite sense, adorned with wit and fancy, he was pronounced, and long considered, literally, the greatest poet that England had seen. A healthy breeze from the unsophisticate region of the Old English Ballads suddenly roused the whole poetical elements into play, restoring a sense of the combined requisites of imagination, of passion, of simple speaking, of music, of animal spirits, &c., not omitting, of course, the true thinking which all sound feeling implies; and though, with the prevailing grave tendency of the English muse, some portions of these poetical requisites came more into play than others, and none of our poets, either since or before, have combined them all as Chaucer and Shakspeare did, yet it would as ill become poets or critics to ignore any one of them in

favour of exclusive pretensions on the part of any others, as it would to say, that all the music, and animal spirits, and comprehensiveness might be taken out of those two wonderful men, and they remain just what they were.

To think that there can be no poetry, properly so called, where there is anything "artificial," where there are conventionalisms of style, where facts are simply related without obviously imaginative treatment, or where manner, for its own sake, is held to be a thing of any account in its presentation of matter, is showing as limited a state of critical perception as that of the opposite conventional faction, who can see no poetry out of the pale of received forms, classical associations, or total subjections of spiritual to material treatment. It is a case of imperfect sympathy on both sides;—of incompetency to discern and enjoy in another what they have no corresponding tendency to in themselves. It is often a complexional case; perhaps always so, more or less: for writers and critics, like all other human creatures, are physically as well as morally disposed to be what they become. It is the entire man that writes and thinks, and not

merely the head. His leg has often as much to do with it as his head;—the state of his calves, his vitals, and his nerves.

There is a charming line in Chaucer:—

"Uprose the sun, and uprose Emily."

Now here are two simple matters of fact, which happen to occur simultaneously. The sun rises, and the lady rises at the same time. Well, what is there in that, some demanders of imaginative illustration will say? Nothing, answers one, but an hyperbole. Nothing, says another, but a conceit. It is a mere commonplace turn of gallantry, says a third. On the contrary, it is the reverse of all this. It is pure morning freshness, enthusiasm, and music. Writers, no doubt, may repeat it till it becomes a commonplace, but that is another matter. Its first sayer, the great poet, sees the brightest of material creatures, and the beautifulest of human creatures, rising at dawn at the same time.. He feels the impulse strong upon him to do justice to the appearance of both; and with gladness in his face, and music on his tongue, repeating the accent on a repeated syllable, and dividing the *rhythm* into two equal parts, in order to leave nothing undone

to show the merit on both sides, and the rapture of his impartiality, he utters, for all time, his enchanting record.*

Now it requires animal spirits, or a thoroughly loving nature, to enjoy that line completely; and yet, on looking well into it, it will be found to contain (by implication) simile, analogy, and, indeed, every other form of imaginative expression, apart from that of direct illustrative words; which, in such cases, may be called needless commentary. The poet lets nature speak for herself. He points to the two beautiful objects before us, and is content with simply hailing them in their combination.

In all cases where Nature should thus be left to speak for herself (and they are neither mean nor few cases, but many and great) the imaginative faculty, which some think to be totally suspended at such times,

* The *Knight's Tale*, in which this line occurs, is an exquisite abridgment of a long and prolix poem, called *The Thescid* (*La Teseide*), by Boccaccio, who, great, and grave, and Chaucer-like genius as he was in other respects, and subjected by the same causes to the same popular misconception, did not possess the art of writing verse. Though Boccaccio, however, supplied Chaucer with the original story, the line here quoted, with numberless other beauties, is our poet's own.

is, on the contrary, in full activity, keeping aloof all irrelevancies and impertinence, and thus showing how well it understands its great mistress. When Lady Macbeth says she should have murdered Duncan herself,

> "Had he not resembled
> Her father as he slept,"

she said neither more nor less than what a poor criminal said long afterwards, and quite unaware of the passage, when brought before a magistrate from a midnight scuffle in a barge on the Thames;—"I should have killed him, if he had not looked so like my father while he was sleeping." Shakspeare made poetry of the thought by putting it into verse,—into modulation; but he would not touch it otherwise. He reverenced Nature's own simple, awful, and sufficing suggestion too much, to add a syllable to it for the purpose of showing off his subtle powers of imaginative illustration. And with no want of due reverence to Shakspeare be it said, that it is a pity he did not act invariably with the like judgment;—that he suffered thought to crowd upon thought, where the first feeling was enough. So, what can possibly be imagined

simpler, finer, completer, less wanting anything beyond itself, than the line in which poor old Lear, unable to relieve himself with his own trembling fingers, asks the byestander to open his waistcoat for him,—not forgetting, in the midst of his anguish, to return him thanks for so doing, like a gentleman:

"Pray you undo this button.—Thank you, Sir."

The poet here presents us with two matters of fact, in their simplest and apparently most prosaical form; yet, when did ever passion or imagination speak more intensely? and this, purely because he has let them alone?

There is another line in Chaucer, which seems to be still plainer matter of fact, with no imagination in it of any kind, apart from the simple necessity of imagining the fact itself. It is in the story of the Tartar king, which Milton wished to have had completed. The king has been feasting, and is moving from the feast to a ball-room:

"Before him goeth the loud minstrelsy."

Now, what is there in this line (it might be asked) which might not have been said in plain prose? which

indeed is not prose? The king is preceded by his musicians, playing loudly. What is there in that?

Well, there is something even in that, if the prosers who demand so much help to their perceptions could but see it. But verse fetches it out and puts it in its proper state of movement. The line itself, being a line of verse, and therefore a musical movement, becomes processional, and represents the royal train in action. The word "goeth," which a less imaginative writer would have rejected in favour of something which he took to be more spiritual and uncommon, is the soul of the continuity of the movement. It is put, accordingly, in its most emphatic place. And the word "loud" is suggestive at once of royal power, and of the mute and dignified serenity, superior to that manifestation of it, with which the king follows.

"*Before* him goeth the loud minstrelsy."

Any reader who does not recognise the stately "go," and altogether noble sufficingness of that line, may rest assured that thousands of the beauties of poetry will remain for ever undiscovered by him, let him be helped by as many thoughts and images as he may.

So in a preceding passage where the same musicians are mentioned.

"And so befell, that after the third course,
While that this King sat thus in his nobley,—[*nobleness*
Hearing his minstrallés their thingés play
Before him at his board deliciously,
In at the hallé-door all suddenly
There came a knight upon a steed of brass,
And in his hand a broad mirror of glass;
Upon his thumb he had of gold a ring,
And by his side a naked sword hanging,
And up he rideth to the highé board.—
In all the hallé n'as there spoke a word [*was not*
For marvel of this knight.—Him to behold
Full busily they waited, young and old."

In some of these lines, what would otherwise be prose, becomes, by the musical feeling, poetry. The king, "sitting in his nobleness," is an imaginative picture. The word "deliciously" is a venture of animal spirits, which, in a modern writer, some critics would pronounce to be affected, or too familiar; but the enjoyment, and even incidental appropriateness and *relish* of it, will be obvious to finer senses. And in the pause in the middle of the last couplet but one, and that in the course of the first line of its successor, examples were given by this supposed unmusical old

poet, of some of the highest refinements of versification.

The secret of musical, as of all other feeling, lies in the depths of the harmonious adjustments of our nature; and a chord touched in any one of them, vibrates with the rest. In the Queen's beautiful letter to Mr. Sidney Herbert, about the sufferers in the Crimea, the touching words, "those poor noble wounded and sick men," would easily, and with perfectly poetical sufficiency, flow into verse. Chaucer, with his old English dissyllable, *poorĕ*, (more piteous, because lingering in the sound,) would have found in them a verse ready made to his hand—

"Those poorĕ noble wounded and sick men."

The passage is in fact just like one of his own verses, sensitive, earnest, strong, simple, full of truth, full of harmonious sympathy. Many a manly eye will it moisten; many a poor soldier, thus acknowledged to be a "noble," will it pay for many a pang. What, if transferred to verse, would it need from any other kind of imaginative treatment? What, indeed, could it receive but injury? And yet, to see what is said by the demanders, on every possible poetical occasion, of per-

petual commentating thoughts and imaginative analogies, one must conclude that they would pronounce it to be wholly unfit for poetry, unless something very fine were added about "poor," something very fine about "noble," something very fine about "wounded," and something very fine about "sick;" a process by which our sympathy with the suffering heroes would come to nothing, in comparison with our astonishment at the rhetoric of the eulogizers,—which, indeed, is a "consummation" that writers of this description would seem to desire.

Of all the definitions which have been given of poetry, the best is that which pronounces it to be "geniality, singing." I think, but am not sure, that it is Lamb's; perhaps it is Coleridge's. I had not seen it, or, if I had, had lost all recollection of it, when I wrote the book called *Imagination and Fancy;* otherwise I would have substituted it for the definition given in that book; for it comprehends, by implication, all which is there said respecting the different classes and degrees of poetry, and excludes, at the same time, whatsoever does not properly come within the limits of the thing defined.

Geniality, thus considered, is not to be understood in its common limited acceptation of a warm and flowing spirit of companionship. It includes that and every other motive to poetic utterance; but it resumes its great primal meaning of the power of productiveness; that power from which the word Genius is derived, and which falls in so completely with the meaning of the word Poet itself, which is Maker. The poet makes, or produces, because he has a desire to do so; and what he produces is found to be worthy, in proportion as time shows a desire to retain it. As all trees are trees, whatever be the different degrees of their importance, so all poets are poets whose productions have a character of their own, and take root in the ground of national acceptance. The poet sings, because he is excited, and because whatsoever he does must be moulded into a shape of beauty. If imagination predominates in him, and it is of the true kind, and he loves the exercise of it better than the fame, he stands a chance of being a poet of the highest order, but not of the only order. If fancy predominates, and the fancy is of the true kind, he is no less a poet in kind, though inferior in degree. If thought predomi-

nate, he is a contemplative poet: if a variety of these faculties in combination, he is various accordingly; less great, perhaps, in each individually, owing to the divided interest which he takes in the claim upon his attention; but far greater, if equally great in all. Nevertheless, he does not hinder his less accomplished brethren from being poets. There is a talk of confining the appellation poet, to the inspired poet. But who and what is the inspired poet? Inspired means "breathed into;" that is to say, by some superior influence. But how is not Dryden breathed into as well as Chaucer? Milton as well as Shakspeare? or Pope as well as Milton? The flute, though out of all comparison with the organ, is still an instrument "breathed into." The only question is, whether it is breathed into finely, and so as to render it a flute extraordinary; whether the player is a man of genius after his kind, not to be mechanically made. You can no more make a Burns than a Homer; no more the author of a *Rape of the Lock* than the author of *Paradise Lost*. If you could, you would have Burnses as plentiful as blackberries, and as many *Rapes of the Lock* as books of mightier pretension, that are for ever coming out and going into

oblivion. Meantime, the *Rape of the Lock* remains, and why? Because it is an inspired poem; a poem as truly inspired by the genius of wit and fancy, as the gravest and grandest that ever was written was inspired by passion and imagination.

This is the secret of a great, national, book-reading fact, the existence of which has long puzzled exclusives in poetry; to wit, the never-failing demand in all civilized countries for successive publications of bodies of collected verse, called English or British Poets, Italian Poets, French Poets, Spanish Poets, &c.—collections which stand upon no ceremony whatever with exclusive predilections, but tend to include every thing that has attained poetical repute, and are generally considered to be what they ought to be in proportion as they are copious. Poetasters are sometimes admitted for poets; and poets are sometimes missed, because they have been taken for poetasters. But, upon the whole, the chance of excess is preferred: and the preference is well founded; for the whole system is founded on a judicious instinct. Feelings are nature's reasons; communities often feel better than individuals reason; and they feel better in this instance.

Hence Popes and Drydens never cease to be found in collections of English verse, as well as Spensers and Miltons: hence Butlers and Swifts, as well as Popes and Drydens: hence all writers in verse, who have any character of their own whatsoever, and whose productions, having once become acquainted with them, readers who love "geniality" of any kind, "singing," would miss. Butler could not have said so well in prose what he has said in verse; and hence he felt an impulse to speak in verse, and he is a wit-poet accordingly. The flow of Swift's wit, of Prior's, of Green's (pity that the stream in the two former is so often polluted), would have wanted half its force and effect, without the compression given to it by verse. They felt this; they were as much inclined to the song of it as to the substance; and hence they also are wits who "sing;"—poets, after their kind, not to be left out of the collections.*

* It is gratifying to see that Mr. Bell's new edition of the Poets proceeds on this principle. He has given us a sample of it in being the first to admit into such a collection the works of Oldham, accompanied by a most satisfactory estimate of the life and writings of that promising young demi-savage of the school of Dryden.

I had intended to close this Preface with something very modest, and very true, upon the difference, in various respects (I do not say in every respect), between my knowledge of what poetry ought to perform, and my own power of performing it. But I am a little tired of helping incompetent critics to discover and to overstate what is defective in me, and therefore shall leave them to gather the information where they can.

The *Story of Rimini* was written at a period of transition from the artificial to the natural style of verse, and was thought at the time a bold innovation in behalf of the latter. I had the pleasure of seeing it break up the monotony of the heroic system of versification then remaining. Had I written the poem now, I should have done much of it in a different manner, though I doubt whether with advantage to something in it of a certain youthful freshness. The young painting, however, has now become an old one; perhaps time has given it a mellowness which in some eyes may not be without its recommendation, especially when so many experiments are being made in poetical drawing and colouring, the correctness and congruity of which are not always as apparent as the abundance

of their materials. At all events, the painting is after a certain mode, and had better be judged accordingly. I hope the long interval between its composition and that of later pieces and the *Legend of Florence*, has not altogether been passed in vain.

A STUDY IN VERSIFICATION.

(*From the Preface to the Octavo Edition of the Author's Poetical Works in the Year* 1832.)

* * * * * *

I HAVE retained, in the versification of the following poems, not only the triplets and alexandrines which some have objected to from their infrequent use in heroic poetry since the time of Dryden, but the double rhymes which have been disused since the days of Milton.

It has been said of the triplet, that it is only a temptation to add a needless line to what ought to be comprised in two. This is manifestly a half-sighted objection; for at least the converse of the proposition may be as true; namely, that it comprises, in one additional line, what two might have needlessly extended. And undoubtedly compression is often obtained by the

triplet, and should never be injured by it; but I take its true spirit to be this;—that it carries onward the fervour of the poet's feeling; delivers him for the moment, and on the most suitable occasions, from the ordinary laws of his verse; and enables him to finish his impulse with triumph. In all instances where the triplet is not used for the mere sake of convenience, it expresses continuity of some sort, whether for the purpose of extension, or inclusion; and this is the reason why the alexandrine so admirably suits it, the spirit of both being a sustained enthusiasm. In proportion as this enthusiasm is less, or the feeling to be conveyed is one of hurry in the midst of aggregation, the alexandrine is perhaps generally dropped. The continuity implied by the triplet is one of four kinds: it is either an impatience of stopping, arising out of an eagerness to include; or it is the march of triumphant power; or it "builds the lofty rhyme" for some staider show of it; or lastly, it is the indulgence of a sense of luxury and beauty, a prolongation of delight. Dryden has fine specimens of all.

Of the impatience of stopping:—a description of agitation of nerves:—

"While listening to the murmuring leaves he stood,
More than a mile immers'd within the wood,
At once the wind was laid—the whispering sound
Was dumb—a rising earthquake rock'd the ground:
With deeper brown the grove was overspread,
A sudden horror seized his giddy head,
And his ears tinkled, and his colour fled."

Theodore and Honoria.

Of the sense of power:—

"If joys hereafter must be purchas'd here,
With loss of all that mortals hold so dear,
Then welcome infamy and public shame,
And last, a long farewell to worldly fame!
'Tis said with ease; but oh, how hardly tried
By haughty souls to human honour tied!
Oh, sharp convulsive pangs of agonizing pride!"

Hind and Panther.

Of elevation and proportion:—

"Our builders were with want of genius curst;
The second temple was not like the first;
Till you, the best Vitruvius, come at length,
Our beauties equal, but excel our strength:
Firm Doric pillars found your solid base,
The fair Corinthian crowns the higher space,
Thus all below is strength, and all above is grace."

Epistle to Congreve.

Of continuity of enjoyment:—

"The fanning wind upon her bosom blows,
To meet the fanning wind the bosom rose;
The fanning wind and purling stream continue her repose."

Cymon and Iphigenia.

This last verse, which is two syllables longer than an alexandrine, and is happily introduced in this place, is peculiar to Dryden, and was taken by him from the lyric poets of his day. So was the alexandrine itself, and the triplet.

If Dryden had had sentiment, he would have been as great a poet natural, as he was artificial. The want, it must be owned, is no trifle! It is idle, however, to wish the addition of these cubits to human stature. Let us be content with the greatness his genius gave him, and with our power to look up to it.

Pope denounced alexandrines in a celebrated couplet, in which he seems to confound length of line with slowness of motion; two very distinct things, as Mr. Lamb has shown in one of his masterly essays.

> "A needless alexandrine ends the song,
> Which, like a wounded snake, drags its slow length along."

And yet, in his no less celebrated eulogy upon the versification of Dryden, he has attempted an imitation of his master's style, in which he has introduced both alexandrine and triplet.

> "Waller was smooth; but Dryden taught to join
> The varying verse, the full majestic line,
> The long resounding march, and energy divine."

How comes it, then, that he rejected both from his own poetry? The reason was, that he acted by a judicious instinct. He felt, that variety and energy were not what his muse would deal in, but beauties of a different sort; and he wisely confined himself to what he could do best. It is true, it seems strange that he should exalt Dryden's variety at the expense of Waller's smoothness. It looks like dispraising himself. But then he felt that he had more in him than Waller; and that if he had not Dryden's variety, neither had he his carelessness, but carried the rhyming heroic to what he thought a perfection superior to both, and justly purchased by the sacrifice of Dryden's inequality. Inferior indeed as Pope's versification is to Dryden's, upon every principle both of power and music, nobody can deny that it admirably suits the nicer point of his genius, and the subjects on which it was exercised. Dryden had a trenchant sword, which demanded stoutness in the sheath. Pope's weapon was a lancet enclosed in pearl.*

* We may see the difference exemplified in a couplet from their respective translations of Homer, neither of them, it must be confessed, worthy of the great broad hand of the old Greek: but the

Let it not be thought (as it has too often been unthinkingly asserted) that remarks of this kind are meant to disparage our great master of poetic wit; to whose genius I should think it a foppery to express even my homage, were it not for the sake of guarding against the imputation of a more preposterous immodesty. But, in endeavouring to ascertain critically what is best in general composition, one is sometimes obliged to notice what is not so good, except in specific instances.

two passages, especially the words marked in italics, are singularly characteristic of the writers. It is in the scene of the quarrel with Agamemnon, where Achilles, with his blade half out of the sheath, suddenly feels the hair of his head seized by his admonitress, Minerva, and with moody submission, dashes the "great sword" back again with his "heavy hand." Homer says :—

> Ἦ, καὶ ἐπ' ἀργυρέῃ κώπῃ σχέθε χεῖρα βαρεῖαν,
> Ἄψ δ' ἐς κουλεὸν ὦσε μέγα ξίφος, οὐδ' ἀπίθησε
> Μύθῳ Ἀθηναίης. *Lib. I. v.* 219.

Dryden thus gives the passage :—

> "He said; with surly faith believed her word,
> And in the sheath, reluctant, *plung'd* the sword."

Pope has it thus :—

> "He said, observant of the *blue-eyed* maid,
> Then in the sheath *return'd* the *shining* blade."

"Surly faith" is too homely and familiar; but the word *plung'd* is excellent, and comes precisely at the point of the verse where the sound of it is strongest and most analogous. It is the action itself. Pope's is that of an officer on parade.

I confess I like the very bracket that marks out the triplet to the reader's eye, and prepares him for the music of it. It has a look like the bridge of a lute.

With regard to double rhymes in the serious heroic couplet, they have been exploded among us ever since we fell under the formal spirit of the French school of Louis the Fourteenth's time. Waller, I believe, is the last writer of eminence in whom they are to be found; and in him they are very rare, and probably confined to his younger verses. Yet it is curious, that the rhyme in heroic French poetry is alternately single and double; in Italian poetry it is all double. In both instances, words have dictated to thoughts. The Italian language is so abundant in words of more than one syllable, and in accents upon the last syllable but one, that, except in lyric pieces, (where the understood accompaniment of music has modified the more formal rules of composition in all languages, and where the Italian singer nevertheless stretches out one terminating sound into two, whenever he can), a rhyming monosyllable has a quaintness and singularity in it, almost as startling as a box on the ear. It is for this reason, that whenever Pulci and the other old poets

made use of it, they took the liberty of adding a syllable, or of restoring one which custom had cut off. In the case of the French, their stock of ultimate and penultimate accents is more equally divided than in either Italian or English; and as their poetry, though in the flow of its lines it really has more of the Italian freedom than ours, yet for want of equal vigour to either has fallen more under the necessity of distinguishing itself from prose, they gladly availed themselves of the circumstance, and made a rhyming system out of the alternation above-mentioned.* In English we have so many monosyllables, in addition to our stock of final accents, that when the sense of

* In the works of Drummond of Hawthornden (*Songs and Sonnets*, Part I.) is a poem written after the French rhyming fashion, the only one (as far as I am aware) in the language. The following is a specimen, selected for the graceful vision in it :—

"Methought through all the neighbour woods a noise
Of chóristers, more sweet than lute or voice,
(For those harmonious sounds to Jove are given
By the swift touches of the nine-string'd heaven,—
Such air has nothing else) did wound (?) mine ear;
No soul but would become all ear to hear:
And whilst I listening lay, O lovely wonder!
I saw a pleasant myrtle cleave asunder,—
A myrtle great with birth,—out of whose womb
Three naked nymphs more white than snow forth come;—
For nymphs they seem'd. About their heavenly faces,
In waves of gold, floated their curling tresses," &c.

elegance and regularity became superior with us to passion and the love of truth, the superabundance of single rhymes had a natural tendency to throw out the double ones. Matter became secondary to manner; and by a natural consequence, the manner was not the best, but proceeded upon secondary assumptions.

I have made a compromise in this matter of double rhymes. I have altered them to single ones, wherever I felt that they could be readily discarded, or without gainsaying the impulse with which I wrote. In the other cases I have retained them. My first determination, in sitting down to correct the *Story of Rimini*, was to discard them altogether. I was prevented by a couplet in a great poet, which I cannot at present find. But I was wrong in the misgiving; for I wrote them out of a real impulse, and not a pretended one; and I may venture to think, that impulses of this kind are a proper modification of the style of those who feel them. To deny them for the sake of denying, would be as foolish a thing as for a painter to efface the most involuntary touches of his pencil, not because they were out of nature, but because they were out of fashion. There is a consistency in manner as well as

matter. The foliage of every species of tree does not suit every other, nor would be very safely displaced for any. And after all, the use which I have made of double rhymes, is a revival, not an innovation. That they are in themselves not incompatible with the greatest feeling and seriousness, might be shown, not only by the footing they have retained in lyric verse upon the loftiest occasions, but by a hundred examples out of the rhymed couplet, in the works of our greatest poets. Hear young Milton, practising his organic numbers. He is addressing his native language:—

"Yet I had rather, if I were to chuse,
Thy service in some graver subject use,
Such as may make thee search thy coffers round,
Before thou clothe my fancy in fit sound;
Such where the deep transported mind may soar
Above the wheeling poles, and at heaven's door
Look in, and see each blissful deity,
How he before the thunderous throne doth lie,
Listening to what the unshorn Apollo sings
To the touch of golden wires, while Hebe brings
Immortal nectar to her kingly sire:
Then passing through the spheres of watchful fire,
And misty regions of wide air next *under*,
And hills of snow, and lofts of piled *thunder*,
May tell at length how green-eyed Neptune raves,
In heaven's defiance mustering all his waves."

So, who would lose the melancholy sounds of the words *morrow* and *sorrow*, in Spenser's famous description of the miseries of a court-suitor?

"Full little knowest thou, that hast not tride,
What hell it is in suing long to bide;
To lose good dayes, that might be better spent;
To waste long nights in pensive discontent;
To speed to-day, to be put back *to-morrow*;
To feed on hope, to pine with feare and *sorrow*;
To have thy prince's grace, yet want her peeres;
To have thy asking, yet waite manie yeares;
To fret thy soul with crosses and with cares;
To eate thy heart with comfortlesse despaires;
To fawne, to crouch, to waite, to ride, to runne,
To spend, to give, to want, to be undone."

I will here observe, by the way, how easy it was for these great poets to write in the smooth measure of the moderns, and how well they did it when they thought fit. Spenser wanted to make out a list of his court grievances (for they were his own), and he felt that a sort of energetic formality was the best shape in which to put it. It would be the better *item'd* in the memory. Shakspeare has written Iago's famous banter on good women upon a similar principle. The smooth and reckoning formality of the

versification answers to the moral idea intended to be conveyed:—

"*Desdemona.* O heavy ignorance!—thou praisest the worst best. But what praise could'st thou bestow on a deserving woman indeed!—one, that in the authority of her merit, did justly put on the vouch of very malice itself?

"*Iago.* She that was ever fair, and never proud,
Had tongue at will, and yet was never loud;
Never lack'd gold, and yet went never gay;
Fled from her wish, and yet said, 'Now I may;'
She that, being anger'd, her revenge being nigh,
Bade her wrong stay, and her displeasure fly;
She, that in wisdom never was so frail
To take the cod's head for the salmon's tail;
She that would think, and ne'er disclose her mind;
See suitors following, and not look behind;
She was a wight—if ever such wight were—

"*Des.* To do what?

"*Iago.* To suckle fools, and chronicle small beer."

With very little allowance, this is the heroic style of versification, such as it prevailed in the last century. The concluding line might have been one of Pope's. It is in his best manner, both as to sound and wit. The satires of Hall, written in the time of Shakspeare, are full of this kind of music, and are the real originators of it as a thing continuous, and not the poems of Waller; though the smoother subjects of the latter, and the care he took to have no roughness at all,

set the more immediate example to the writers who followed him.*

To return to double rhymes. They are as old in our language as Chaucer, whose versification is as unlike the crabbed and unintentional stuff it is supposed to be, as possible, and has never had justice done it. The sweet and delicate gravity of its music is answerable to the sincerity of the writer's heart. Take a specimen out of his character of the "Good Priest," including some double rhymes:—

"Benigne he was, and wonder diligent,
And in adversitè ful patient:
And swich he was yproved often *sithes;* (often sithence, or since)
Full loth were him to cursen for his *tithes;*
But rather would he given, out of doubte,
Unto his poorè† parishens aboute,
Of his offring, and eke of his substance;
He coulde, in litel thing, have suffisance.
* * * * *

* It must have been a slip of the memory (wonderful was it for not slipping more!) which induced Sir Walter Scott (in his edition of Dryden, vol. xi. p. 100) to class Hall and Donne together as inharmonious writers. Hall is the smoothest, as Donne is the ruggedest, of all our old satirists. See Warton's remarks upon him in the fifth volume of Chalmers's British Poets.

† The è, which is to be thus retained whenever the writer pleases, (and which is perhaps the origin of the gratuitous vowel prefixed to

"He settè not his benefice to hire,
And let his sheep accombred in the mire,
And ran into Londòn, unto Seint *Poules*,
To seeken him a chantarie for *soules*,
Or with a brotherhood to be withold;
But dwelt at home, and keptè wel his fold,
So that the wolf ne made it not *miscarrie:*
He was a shepherd, and no *mercenarie*."

There is one other custom of the old poets, or rather of Chaucer, (for I cannot call to mind any other who has made a principle of it as he has done, though in the poets before the Restoration, it is occasionally found among them in the course of their paragraphs,) which appears to me very fit for revival; and that is, the closing a period or a paragraph with the first line of a couplet, and beginning the next with the second. Chaucer took the custom from the French poets, who have retained it to this day. It surely has a fine air, both of conclusion and resumption; as though it would leave off when it thought proper, knowing how well it could re-commence. Chaucer has some fine examples of this break of the couplet in

verbs and participles, as y-gazing, y-called, star-ypointing, that is to say, starrè-pointing) is the same as its counterpart still retained in French poetry, and rose doubtless from the same root. Thus *poorè* is the French *pauvre*.

his Cambuscan; a story which lingered in the ear of Milton. And Milton himself, in a passing way, has used the license nobly, in the lines before quoted.

> "Listening to what the unshorn Apollo sings
> To the touch of golden wires, while Hebe brings
> Immortal nectar to her kingly *sire:*—
> *Then* passing through the spheres of watchful *fire*
> And misty regions of wide air," &c.

I make no apology for repeating thus much of the passage. Fine music provokes repetition.* The following is one of the passages alluded to in Chaucer. It exhibits several examples of the like modulation in its progress.

> "At Sarra, in the land of Tartarie,
> Ther dwelt a king that warried Russie,
> Through which ther died many a doughty man:—
> This noble king was clepèd Cambuscan,

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* There is a beautiful, and manifestly conscious use of this pause in the concluding passage of Mr. Campbell's *Pleasures of Hope.* The poet has intimated the marked pleasure he took in it, by his full stop, and the dash by which it is strengthened.

> "Eternal Hope! when yonder spheres sublime
> Peal'd their first notes to sound the march of Time,
> Thy joyous youth began—but *not to fade.*—
> When all the sister planets have decayed;
> When wrapt in fire the realms of ether glow,
> And Heaven's last thunder shakes the world below,
> Thou, undismay'd, shalt o'er the ruins smile,
> And light thy torch at Nature's funeral pile."

Which in his time was of so great renown,
That ther was no wher, in no regioun,
So excellent a lord in allè thing:—
Him lacked nought that longeth to a king
As of the sect of which that he was borne;
He kept his law to which he was ysworn;
And thereto he was hardie, wise, and rich,
And piteous, and just, and alway yliche, (always alike)
Trewe of his word, benigne and honourable,
Of his courage as any centre stable;
Young, fresh, and strong, in arms desirous,
As any bachelor of all his house.
A fair person he was, and fortunate,
And kept alway, so well, real estate, (royal estate)
That ther was no wher such another man.
This noble king, this Tartar, Cambuscàn,
Haddè two sonnes by Elfeta his wife,
which the eldest sonne hight Algarsife—" &c.

So in the *Knight's Tale*, after the paragraph ending,

"Ther as this Emelie had her playing.
Bright was the sonne, and clear the morwening—"

which, by the way, is a noble re-commencing verse. The trisyllable *mōrwĕnĭng* is particularly beautiful —much better than *morning*, or even than *morrowning*, which was its next modification.

It seems to me, that beautiful as are the compositions which the English language possesses in the heroic couplet, it remains for some poet hereafter to

perfect the versification, by making a just compromise between the inharmonious freedom of our old poets in general, and the regularity of Dryden himself; who, noble as his management of it is, beats, after all, too much upon the rhyme. It hinders his matter from having due pre-eminence before his manner. If any one could unite the vigour of Dryden with the ready and easy variety of pause in the works of the late Mr. Crabbe, and the lovely poetic consciousness in the *Lamia* of Keats, in which the lines seem to take pleasure in the progress of their own beauty, like sea-nymphs luxuriating through the water, he would be a perfect master of rhyming heroic verse.

THE STORY OF RIMINI;

OR, FRUITS OF A PARENT'S FALSEHOOD.

Time, the Fourteenth Century. The Scene lies first at Ravenna, and afterwards at Rimini.

ARGUMENT.

THIS poem is founded on the beautiful episode of Paulo and Francesca in the fifth book of the *Inferno*, where it stands like a lily in the mouth of Tartarus. The substance of what Dante tells us of the history of the two lovers is to be found at the end of the third Canto. The rest has been gathered from the commentators. They differ in their accounts of it, but all agree that the lady was, in some measure, beguiled into the match with the elder and less attractive Malatesta,—Boccaccio says, by having the younger brother pointed out to her as her destined husband, as he was passing over a square.

Francesca of Ravenna was the daughter of Guido Novello da Polenta, lord of that city, and was married to Giovanni, or, as others call him, Launcelot Malatesta, Lord of Rimini, under circumstances that had given her an innocent predilection for Paulo, his younger brother. The falsehood thus practised upon her had fatal consequences. In the Poem before the reader, the Duke her father, a weak, though not ill-disposed man, desirous, on a political account of marrying her to the Prince of Rimini, and dreading her objections in case she sees him and becomes acquainted with his unamiable manners, contrives that he shall send his brother as his proxy, and

that the poor girl shall believe the one prince to be the sample of the other. Experience undeceives her; Paulo has been told the perilous secret of her preference for him; and in both of them a struggle with their sense of duty takes place, for which the insincere and selfish morals of others had not prepared them. Giovanni discovers the secret, from words uttered by his wife in her sleep: he forces Paulo to meet him in single combat, and slays him, not without sorrow for both, and great indignation against the father: Francesca dies of a broken heart; and the two lovers, who had come to Ravenna in the midst of a gay cavalcade, are sent back to Ravenna, dead, in order that he who first helped to unite them with his falsehood, should bury them in one grave for his repentance.

CANTO I.

THE COMING TO FETCH THE BRIDE FROM RAVENNA.

THE sun is up, and 'tis a morn of May
Round old Ravenna's clear-shown towers and bay,
A morn, the loveliest which the year has seen,
Last of the spring, yet fresh with all its green;
For a warm eve, and gentle rains at night,
Have left a sparkling welcome for the light,
And there's a crystal clearness all about;
The leaves are sharp, the distant hills look out;
A balmy briskness comes upon the breeze;
The smoke goes dancing from the cottage trees;
And when you listen, you may hear a coil
Of bubbling springs about the grassier soil;

And all the scene in short,—sky, earth, and sea,
Breathes like a bright-eyed face, that laughs out
openly.

'Tis nature, full of spirits, waked and springing:—
The birds to the delightful time are singing,
Darting with freaks and snatches up and down,
As though they shar'd the transport in the town;
While happy faces, striking through the green
Of leafy roads, at every turn are seen;
And the far ships, lifting their sails of white
Like joyful hands, come up with scatter'd light;
Come gleaming up, true to the wish'd-for day,
And chase the whistling brine, and swirl into the
bay.

And well may all who can, conspire to come
By field, by forest, and the bright sea-foam,
Where peace returning, and processions rare,
Princes, and donatives, and faces fair,
And to crown all, a marriage in May-weather
Are summonses to bring blithe souls together:
For on this great glad day, Ravenna's pride,
The daughter of their prince, becomes a bride,
A bride, to ransom an exhausted land:
And he, whose victories have obtain'd her hand,

Has taken with the dawn, so flies report,
His promis'd journey to the expecting court,
With hasting pomp, and squires of high degree,
The bold Giovanni, lord of Rimini.

Already in the streets the stir grows loud
Of joy increasing and a bustling crowd.
With feet and voice the gathering hum contends,
Yearns the deep talk, the ready laugh ascends;
Callings, and clapping doors, and curs unite,
And shouts from mere exuberance of delight,
And armed bands, making important way,
Gallant and grave, the lords of holiday,
And nodding neighbours, greeting as they run,
And pilgrims, chanting in the morning sun.
With heav'd-out tapestry the windows glow,
By lovely faces brought, that come and go;
Till, the work smooth'd, and all the street attir'd,
They take their seats, with upward gaze admir'd;
Some looking down, some forwards or aside,
Some re-adjusting tresses newly tied,
Some turning a trim waist, or o'er the flow
Of crimson cloths hanging a hand of snow;
But all with smiles prepar'd, and garlands green,
And all in fluttering talk, impatient for the scene.

And hark! the approaching trumpets, with a start
On the smooth wind come dancing to the heart.
A moment's hush succeeds; and from the walls,
Firm and at once, a silver answer calls.
Then press the crowd; and all who best can strive
In shuffling struggle, tow'rd the palace drive,
Where baluster'd and broad, of marble fair,
Its portico commands the public square;
For there Duke Guido is to hold his state
With his fair daughter, seated o'er the gate:—
But the full place rejects the invading tide;
And after a rude heave from side to side,
With angry faces turn'd, and feet regain'd,
The peaceful press with order is maintain'd,
Leaving the foot-ways only for the crowd,
The lordly space within for the procession proud.

For in this manner is the square set out:—
The sides are nearly fill'd all round about,
And faced with guards, who keep the road entire;
While, opposite the ducal seat, a quire
Of knights and ladies hold one houseless spot,
Seated in groups upon a grassy plot;
The seats with boughs are shaded from above
Of bays and roses, trees of wit and love;

And in the midst, fresh whistling through the scene,
A lightsome fountain starts from out the green,
Clear and compact, till, at its height o'er-run,
It shakes its loosening silver in the sun.

There, talking with the ladies, you may see,
As in some nest of faery poetry,
Some of the finest warriors of the court,—
Baptist, and Hugo of the stately port,
And Guelfo, and Ridolfo, and the flower
Of jousters, Galeas of the Sylvan Tower,
And Felix the Fine Arm, and him who well
Repaid the Black Band robbers, Lionel,
With more that have pluck'd beards of Turk and Greek,
And made the close Venetian lower his sails, and speak.

There too, in thickest of the bright-eyed throng,
Stands a young father of Italian song,
Guy Cavalcanti, of a knightly race;
The poet looks out in his earnest face;
He with the pheasant's plume—there—bending now;
Something he speaks around him with a bow,
And all the listening looks, with nods and flushes,
Break round him into smiles and grateful blushes.

Another start of trumpets, with reply,
And o'er the gate a crimson canopy
Opens to right and left its flowing shade,
And Guido issues with the princely maid,
And sits;—the courtiers fall on either side;
But every look is fix'd upon the bride,
Who pensive comes at first, and hardly hears
The enormous shout that springs as she appears;
Till, as she views the countless gaze below,
And faces that with grateful homage glow,
A home to leave, and husband yet to see,
Fade in the warmth of that great charity;
And hard it is, she thinks, to have no will;
But not to bless these thousands, harder still.
With that, a keen and quivering glance of tears
Scarce moves her patient mouth, and disappears;
A smile is underneath, and breaks away,
And round she looks and breathes, as best befits the day.

What need I tell of lovely lips and eyes,
Sweet natural waist, and bosom's balmy rise,
The white dress orange-mantled, or the curls
Bedding an airy coronet of pearls?
Let each man fancy, looking down, the brow
He loves the best, and think he sees it now.

The women dote on the sweet dress; the men
Dote on the face, and gaze, and gaze again.

But now comes something to dispute the gaze,
For a new shout the neighb'ring quarters raise:
The train are in the town, and gathering near
With noise of cavalry, and trumpets clear,
A princely music, unbedinn'd with drums;
The mighty brass seems opening as it comes;
And now it fills, and now it shakes the air,
And now it bursts into the sounding square;
At which the crowd with such a shout rejoice,
Each thinks he's deafen'd with his neighbour's voice.
Then, with a long-drawn breath, the clangours die;
The palace trumpets give a last reply,
And clustering hoofs succeed, with stately stir
Of snortings proud and clinking furniture,
The most majestic sound of human will:—
Nought else is heard sometime, the people are so still.

First come the trumpeters, clad all in white
Except the breast, which wears a scutcheon bright.
By four and four they ride, on horses grey;
And as they sit along their easy way,
To the steed's motion yielding as they go,
Each plants his trumpet on his saddle-bow.

The heralds next appear, in vests attir'd
Of stiffening gold with radiant colours fir'd;
And then the pursuivants, who wait on these,
All dress'd in painted richness to the knees:
Each rides a dappled horse, and bears a shield,
Charg'd with three heads upon a golden field.*

Twelve ranks of squires come after, twelve in one,
With forked pennons lifted in the sun,
Which tell, as they look backward in the wind,
The bearings of the knights that ride behind.
Their steeds are ruddy bay; and every squire
His master's colour shows in his attire.

These past, and at a lordly distance, come
The knights themselves, and fill the quickening hum,
The flower of Rimini. Apart they ride,
Six in a row, and with a various pride;
But all as fresh as fancy could desire,
All shapes of gallantry on steeds of fire.

Differing in colours is the knights' array,
The horses, black and chesnut, roan and bay;—
The horsemen, crimson vested, purple, and white,—
All but the scarlet cloak for every knight,

* The arms of the Malatesta family.

Which, thrown apart, and hanging loose behind,
Rests on the steed, and ruffles in the wind.
Their caps of velvet have a lightsome fit,
Each with a dancing feather sweeping it,
And on its border hangs a jewel, gleaming;—
But, what is of the most accomplish'd seeming,
All wear memorials of their ladies' love,—
A ribbon, or a scarf, or silken glove,
Some tied about the arm, some at the breast,
Some, with a drag, dangling from the cap's crest.

A suitable attire the horses show;
The polish'd bits keep wrangling as they go:
The ruddy bridles burn against the sun;
And the rich horse-cloths, ample every one,
Which, from the saddle-bow, dress half the steed,
Are some of them all thick with golden thread:
Others have spots, on grounds of different hue,
As burning stars upon a cloth of blue;
Or purple smearings, with a velvet light,
Rich from the glary yellow thickening bright;
Or a spring green, powdered with April posies;
Or flush vermilion, set with silver roses:
But all go sweeping back, and seem to dress
The forward march with loitering stateliness.

With various earnestness the crowd admire
Horsemen and horse, the motion and the attire.
Some watch, as they go by, the riders' faces
Looking composure, and their knightly graces;
The life, the carelessness, the sudden heed;
The body curving to the rearing steed;
The patting hand, that best persuades the check,
And makes the quarrel up with a proud neck;
The thigh broad-press'd, the spanning palm upon it,
And the jerk'd feather flowing in the bonnet.

Others the horses and their pride explore,
Their jauntiness behind and strength before;
The flowing back, firm chest, and fetlocks clean;
The branching veins ridging the glossy lean;
The mane hung sleekly; the projecting eye
That seems half thinking as it glances by;
The finish'd head, in its compactness free,
Small, and o'erarching to the lifted knee;
The start and snatch, as if they felt the comb,
With mouths that fling about the creamy foam;
The snorting turbulence, the nod, the champing,
The shift, the tossing, and the fiery tramping.

And now the Princess, pale and with fix'd eye,
Perceives the last of those precursors nigh,.

Each rank uncovering, as they pass in state,
Both to the courtly fountain and the gate;
And then a second interval succeeds
Of stately length, and then a troop of steeds
Milkwhite and unattir'd, Arabian bred,
Each by a blooming boy lightsomely led:
They too themselves seem young, and meet the sight
With freshness, after all those colours bright:
In every limb is seen their faultless race,
A fire well temper'd, and a free-left grace.
These for a princely present are divin'd,
And show the giver is not far behind.

The talk increases now, and now advance,
Space after space, with many a sprightly prance,
The pages of the court, in rows of three;
Of white and crimson is their livery.
Space after space,—and still the train appear,—
A fervid whisper fills the general ear—
Ah—yes—no—'tis not he—but 'tis the squires
Who go before him when his pomp requires;
And now his huntsman shows the lessening train,
Now the squire-carver, and the chamberlain,—
And now his banner comes, and now his shield
Borne by the squire that waits him to the field,—

And then an interval,—a lordly space;—
A pin-drop silence strikes o'er all the place;
The princess, from a distance, scarcely knows
Which way to look; her colour comes and goes,
And, with an impulse and affection free,
She lays her hand upon her father's knee,
Who looks upon her with a labour'd smile,
Gathering it up into his own the while,
When some one's voice, as if it knew not how
To check itself, exclaims, "The prince! now—now!"
And on a milk-white courser, like the air,
A glorious figure springs into the square;
Up, with a burst of thunder, goes the shout,
And rolls the echoing walls and peopled roofs
about.

Never was nobler finish of fine sight;
'Twas like the coming of a shape of light;
And many a lovely gazer, with a start,
Felt the quick pleasure smite across her heart.
The princess, who at first could scarcely see,
Though looking still that way from dignity,
Gathers new courage as the praise goes round,
And bends her eyes to learn what they have found.
And see,—his horse obeys the check unseen;
And with an air 'twixt ardent and serene,

Letting a fall of curls about his brow,
He takes his cap off with a gallant bow;
Then for another and a deafening shout,
And scarfs are waved, and flowers come fluttering out,
And, shaken by the noise, the reeling air
Sweeps with a giddy whirl among the fair,
And whisks their garments, and their shining hair.

With busy interchange of wonder glows
The crowd, and loves his bravery as he goes,—
But on his shape the gentler sight attends,
Moves as he passes,—as he bends him, bends,—
Watches his air, his gesture, and his face,
And thinks it never saw such manly grace,
So fine are his bare throat and curls of black,—
So lightsomely dropt in, his lordly back—
His thigh so fitted for the tilt or dance,
So heap'd with strength, and turn'd with elegance;
But above all, so meaning is his look,
As easy to be read as open book;
And such true gallantry the sex descries
In the frank lifting of his cordial eyes.
His haughty steed, who seems by turns to be
Vex'd and made proud by that cool mastery,
Shakes at his bit, and rolls his eyes with care,
Reaching with stately step at the fine air;

And now and then, sideling his restless pace,
Drops with his hinder legs, and shifts his place,
And feels through all his frame a fiery thrill:
The princely rider on his back sits still,
And looks where'er he likes, and sways him at his will.

Surprise, relief, a joy scarce understood,
Something perhaps of very gratitude,
And fifty feelings, undefin'd and new,
Dance through the bride, and flush her faded hue.
"Could I but once," she thinks, "securely place
A trust for the contents on such a case,
And know the spirit that should fill that dwelling,
This chance of mine were hardly call'd compelling."
Just then, the stranger, looking tow'rd the bowers,
Where half the court sat intermix'd with flowers,
Beckons a page, and loos'ning from its hold
A princely jewel with its chain of gold,
Sends it, in token he had lov'd him long,
To the young father of Italian song:
The youth, all thanks and bliss, with lowly grace
Bending his lifted eyes and blushing face,
Looks homage to his great new friend, who bows
With cordial haste, for now he nears the sovereign's house.

This charms all sorrow from the destin'd bride;
She took an interest first, but now a pride;
And as the prince comes riding to the place,
Baring his head, and raising his fine face,
She meets his full obeisance with an eye
Of self-permission and sweet gravity;
He looks with touch'd respect, and gazes, and
goes by.

CANTO II.

THE BRIDE'S JOURNEY TO RIMINI.

Pass we the followers, and their closing state;
The court was enter'd by a hinder gate;
The duke and princess had retir'd before,
Join'd by the knights and ladies at the door;
But something seem'd amiss, and there ensued
Deep talk among the spreading multitude,
Who stood in groups, or paced the measur'd street,
Filling with earnest hum the noontide heat;
Nor ceas'd the wonder, as the day increas'd,
And brought no symptoms of a bridal feast,
No mass, no tilt, no largess for the crowd,
Nothing to answer that procession proud;

But a blank look, as if no court had been,
Silence without and secrecy within;
And nothing heard by listening at the walls,
But now and then a bustling through the halls,
Or the dim organ rous'd at gathering intervals.

The truth was this:—The bridegroom had not come,
But sent his brother, proxy in his room.
A lofty spirit the former was, and proud,
Little gallant, and had a sort of cloud
Hanging for ever on his cold address,
Which he mistook for sovereign manliness.
But more of this hereafter. Guido knew
The prince's faults; and he was conscious too,
That sweet as was his daughter, and prepar'd
To do her duty, where appeal was barr'd,
She had a sense of marriage, just and free,
And where the match look'd ill for harmony,
Might pause with firmness, and refuse to strike
A chord her own sweet music so unlike.
The old man therefore, kind enough at heart,
Yet fond, from habit, of intrigue and art,
And little form'd for sentiments like these,
Which seem'd to him mere maiden niceties,
Had thought at once to gratify the pride
Of his stern neighbour, and secure the bride,

By telling him, that if, as he had heard,
Busy he was just then, 'twas but a word,
And proxies might be found, though not preferr'd;
Only the duke thus farther must presume,
For both their sakes,—that still a prince must come.
The bride meantime was told, and not unmov'd,
To look for one no sooner seen than lov'd;
And when Giovanni, struck with what he thought
Mere proof how his triumphant hand was sought,
Dispatch'd the wish'd-for prince, who was a creature
Form'd in the very poetry of nature,
The effect was perfect, and the future wife
Caught in the elaborate snare, perhaps for life.

One shock there was, however, to sustain,
Which nigh had rous'd her whole sweet wits again.
She saw, when all were housed, in Guido's face
A look of leisurely surprise take place;
A little whispering follow'd for a while,
And then 'twas told her, with an easy smile,
That Prince Giovanni, to his great chagrin,
Had been delay'd by something unforeseen,
But rather than defer his day of bliss
(If his fair ruler took it not amiss)
Had sent his brother Paulo in his stead;
"Who," said old Guido, with a nodding head,

"May well be said to represent his brother,
For when you see the one, you know the other."

By this time Paulo join'd them where they stood,
And seeing her in some uneasy mood,
Chang'd the mere cold respects his brother sent
To such a strain of cordial compliment,
And paid them with an air so frank and bright,
As to a friend whose worth is felt at sight,
That air in short which sets you at your ease,
Without implying your perplexities,
That what with the surprise in every way,
The hurry of the time, the appointed day,
The very shame, which now appeared increas'd,
Of begging leave to have her hand releas'd,
And above all, those tones, and smiles, and looks,
Which seem'd to realize the dreams of books,
And help'd her genial fancy to conclude
That fruit of such a stock must all be good,
She knew no longer how she could oppose:
Quick were the marriage-rites; and at the close,
The proxy, turning midst the general hush,
Kiss'd her meek lips, betwixt a rosy blush.

At last, about the vesper hour, a score
Of trumpets issued from the palace door,

The banners of their brass with favours tied,
And with a blast proclaim'd the wedded bride.
But not a word the sullen silence broke,
Till something of a gift the herald spoke,
And with a bag of money issuing out,
Scatter'd the ready harvest round about;
Then burst the mob into a jovial cry,
And largess! largess! claps against the sky,
And bold Giovanni's name, the lord of Rimini.

The rest however still were looking on,
Careless and mute, and scarce the noise was gone,
When riding from the gate with banners rear'd,
Again the morning visitors appear'd.
The prince was in his place; and in a car,
Before him, glistening like a farewell star,
Sate the dear lady with her brimming eyes;
And off they set, through doubtful looks and cries;
For some too shrewdly guess'd, and some were vex'd
At the dull day, and some the whole perplex'd,
And all great pity thought it to divide
Two that seem'd made for bridegroom and for bride.
Ev'n she, whose heart this strange, abrupt event
Had cross'd and sear'd with burning wonderment,
Could scarce, at times, a starting cry forbear
At leaving her own home and native air;

Till passing now the limits of the town,
And on the last few gazers looking down,
She saw by the road-side an aged throng,
Who, wanting power to bustle with the strong,
Had learnt their gracious mistress was to go,
And gather'd there, an unconcerted show;
Bending they stood with their old foreheads bare,
And the winds finger'd with their reverend hair.
Farewell! farewell, my friends! she would have cried,
But in her throat the leaping accents died,
And, waving with her hand a vain adieu,
She dropt her veil, and backwarder withdrew,
And let the kindly tears their own good course pursue.

It was a lovely evening, fit to close
A lovely day, and brilliant in repose.
Warm, but not dim, a glow was in the air;
The soften'd breeze came smoothing here and there;
And every tree, in passing, one by one,
Gleam'd out with twinkles of the golden sun:
For leafy was the road, with tall array,
On either side, of mulberry and bay,
And distant snatches of blue hills between;
And there the alder was with its bright green,

And the broad chestnut, and the poplar's shoot,
That like a feather waves from head to foot,
With, ever and anon, majestic pines;
And still, from tree to tree, the early vines
Hung garlanding the way in amber lines.

Nor long the princess kept her from the view
Of those dear scenes, as back from sight they flew:
For sitting now, calm from the gush of tears,
With dreaming eye fix'd down, and half-shut ears,
Hearing, yet hearing not, the fervent sound
Of hoofs, thick reckoning, and the wheel's moist round,
A call of "Slower!" from the farther part
Of the check'd riders woke her with a start;
And looking up again, half sigh, half stare,
She lifts her veil, and feels the freshening air.

'Tis down a hill they go, gentle indeed,
And such, as with a bold and playful speed
Another time they would have scorn'd to measure;
But now they take with them a lovely treasure,
And feel they should consult her gentle pleasure.

And now with thicker shades the pines appear;
The noise of hoofs grows duller on the ear;

And quitting suddenly their gravelly toil,
The wheels go spinning o'er a sandy soil.

Here first the silence of the country seems
To come about her with its listening dreams,
And full of anxious thoughts, half freed from pain,
In downward musing she relaps'd again,
Leaving the others who had pass'd that way
In careless spirits of the early day,
To look about, and mark the reverend scene,
For awful tales renown'd, and everlasting green.

A heavy spot the forest looks at first,
To one grim shade condemn'd, and sandy thirst,
Chequer'd with thorns, with thistles run to seed,
Or plashy pools, half cover'd with green weed,
About whose sides the swarming insects fry
In the hot sun, a noisome company.
But entering more and more, they quit the sand
At once, and strike upon a grassy land,
From which the trees, as from a carpet, rise
In knolls and clumps, with rich varieties.
A moment's trouble find the knights to rein
Their horses in, which, feeling turf again,
Thrill, and curvet, and long to be at large
To scour the space and give the winds a charge,

Or pulling tight the bridles, as they pass,
Dip their warm mouths into the freshening grass.
But soon in easy rank, from glade to glade,
Proceed they, coasting underneath the shade,
Some baring to the cool their placid brows,
Some looking upward through the glimmering boughs,
Or peering grave through inward-opening places,
And half prepar'd for glimpse of shadowy faces.
For in these woods it is, and hereabouts,
As not a soul in all Romania doubts,
That the proud dame, who drove the knight to death,
On stated days, resuming mortal breath,
Naked, and crying "Mercy!" with wild face,
Is doom'd to fly him, as he spurs in chase,
And have her heart, through pitiless wide wounds,
Torn from her shrieking side, to feed his hounds.*

Various the trees and passing foliage here,—
Wild pear, and oak, and dusky juniper,
With briony between in trails of white,
And ivy, and the suckle's streaky light,
And moss, warm gleaming with a sudden mark,
Like growths of sunshine left upon the bark,

* See the story in the *Decameron*, Book V., Tale viii.; or in Dryden's fine version of it, entitled *Theodore and Honoria*.

And still the pine, flat-topp'd, and dark, and tall,
In lordly right, predominant o'er all.

Much they admire that old religious tree,
With its new leaves now burning goldenly,—
A tree that seems as it should only grow
Where lonesome winds or solemn organs blow.
At noisy intervals, the living cloud
Of cawing rooks breaks o'er them, gathering loud
Like a wild people, when invaders come;
Then all again, but for themselves, seems dumb,
Or ring-dove, that repeats his pensive plea,
Or startled gull up-screaming towards the sea:
But what they mostly hear, is still the sound
Of their own pomp and progress o'er the ground;
And, birds except, they scarce meet living thing,
Save, now and then, a goat loose wandering,
Or a few cattle, looking up aslant
With sleepy eyes and meek mouths ruminant;
Or once, a plodding woodman, old and bent,
Passing with half indifferent wonderment,
Yet turning, at the last, to look once more;
Then feels his trembling staff, and onward as before.

So ride they pleas'd,—till now the couching sun
Levels his final look through shadows dun;

And the clear moon, with meek o'er-lifted face,
Seems come to look into the silvering place.
Then first the bride waked up, for then was heard,
Sole voice, the poet's and the lover's bird,
Preluding first, as though the sounds were cast
For the dear leaves about her, till at last
With floods of rapture, in a perfect shower,
She vents her heart on the delicious hour.
Lightly the horsemen go, as if they'd ride
A velvet path, and hear no voice beside:
A placid hope assures the breath-suspending bride.

So ride they in delight through beam and shade;
Till many a rill now pass'd, and many a glade,
They quit the piny labyrinths, and soon
Emerge into the full and day-like moon;
Chilling it seems; and pushing steed on steed,
They start them freshly with a homeward speed.
Then well-known fields they pass, and straggling cots.
Boy-storied trees, and love-remember'd spots,
And turning last a sudden corner, see
The moon-lit towers of slumbering Rimini.
The marble bridge comes heaving forth below
With a long gleam; and nearer as they go,
They see the still Marecchia, cold and bright,
Sleeping along with face against the light.

A hollow trample now,—a fall of chains,—
The bride has enter'd,—not a voice remains;—
Night, and a maiden silence, wrap the plains.

CANTO III.

THE FATAL PASSION.

Now why must I disturb a dream of bliss,
And bring cold sorrow 'twixt the wedded kiss?
Why mar the face of beauty, and disclose
The weeping days that with the morning rose,
And bring the bitter disappointment in,—
The holy cheat, the virtue-binding sin,—
The shock, that told this lovely, trusting heart,
That she had given, beyond all power to part,
Her hope, belief, love, passion, to one brother,
Possession (oh, the misery!) to another?

Some likeness was there 'twixt the two,—an air
At times, a cheek, a colour of the hair,
A tone, when speaking of indifferent things;
Nor, by the scale of common measurings,
Would you say more perhaps, than that the one
Was more robust, the other finelier spun;

That of the two, Giovanni was the graver,
Paulo the livelier, and the more in favour.

Pride in his warlike fame made some prefer
Giovanni's countenance as the martialler;
And 'twas a soldier's truly, if an eye
Ardent and cool at once, drawn-back and high,
An eagle nose and a determined lip,
Were the best marks of manly soldiership.
Paulo's was fashion'd in a different mould,
And to a finer end: for though 'twas bold,
When boldness was requir'd, and could put on
A glowing frown as if an angel shone,
Yet there was nothing in it one might call
A stamp exclusive or professional,—
No courtier's face, and yet its smile was ready,—
No scholar's, yet its look was deep and steady,—
No soldier's, for its power was all of mind,
Too true for violence, and too refin'd.
The very nose, lightly though firmly wrought,
Refinement show'd; the brow, clear-spirited thought;
Wisdom looked sweet and inward from his eye,
And round his mouth was sensibility:—
It was a face, in short, seem'd made to show
How far the genuine flesh and blood could go;—

A morning glass of unaffected nature,—
Something, that baffled looks of loftier feature,—
The visage of a glorious human creature.

If any points there were, at which they came
Nearer together, 'twas in knightly fame,
And all accomplishments that art might know,—
Hunting, and princely hawking, and the bow,
The rush together in the bright-eyed list,
Fore-thoughted chess, the riddle rarely miss'd,
And the decision of still knottier points,
With knife in hand, of boar and peacock joints,—
Things, that might shake the fame that Tristan got,
And bring a doubt on perfect Launcelot.*
But leave we knighthood to the former part;
The tale I tell is of the human heart.

The worst of Prince Giovanni, as his bride
Too quickly found, was an ill-temper'd pride.
Bold, handsome, able (if he chose) to please,
Punctual and right in common offices,

* The two famous knights of the Round Table, great huntsmen, and therefore great carvers. Boars and peacocks, served up whole, the latter with the feathers on, were eminent dishes with the knights of old, and must have called forth all the profundity of this accomplishment.

He lost the sight of conduct's only worth,
The scattering smiles on this uneasy earth,
And on the strength of virtues of small weight,
Claim'd tow'rds himself the exercise of great.
He kept no reckoning with his sweets and sours;—
He'd hold a sullen countenance for hours,
And then, if pleas'd to cheer himself a space,
Look for the immediate rapture in your face,
And wonder that a cloud could still be there,
How small soever, when his own was fair.
Yet such is conscience,—so designed to keep
Stern, central watch, though all things else may sleep,
And so much knowledge of one's self can lie
Cored in thy heart, poor Self-complacency,
That no suspicion would have touch'd him more,
Than that of wanting on the generous score:
He would have whelm'd you with a weight of scorn,
Been proud at eve, inflexible at morn,
In short, ill-temper'd for a week to come,
And all to strike that desperate error dumb.
Taste had he, in a word, for high-turn'd merit,
But not the patience, nor the genial spirit;
And so he made, 'twixt virtue and defect,
A sort of fierce demand on your respect,
Which, if assisted by his high degree,
It gave him in some eyes a dignity,

And struck a meaner deference in the many,
Left him at last unloveable with any.

From this complexion in the reigning brother,
His younger birth in part had saved the other.
Born to a homage less gratuitous,
He learn'd to win a nobler for his house;
And both from habit and a genial heart,
Without much trouble of the reasoning art,
Found this the wisdom and the sovereign good,—
To be, and make, as happy as he could.
Not that he saw, or thought he saw, beyond
His general age, and could not be as fond
Of wars and creeds as any of his race,—
But most he lov'd a happy human face;
And wheresoe'er his fine, frank eyes were thrown,
He struck the looks he wish'd for, with his own.
So what but service leap'd where'er he went!
Was there a tilt-day or a tournament,—
For welcome grace there rode not such another,
Nor yet for strength, except his lordly brother,
Was there a court-day, or a feast, or dance,
Or minstrelsy with roving plumes from France,
Or summer party to the greenwood shade,
With lutes prepar'd, and cloth on herbage laid,

And ladies' laughter coming through the air,—
He was the readiest and the blithest there;
And made the time so exquisitely pass
With stories told with elbow on the grass,
Or touch'd the music in his turn so finely,
That all he did, they thought, was done divinely.

The lovely stranger could not fail to see
Too soon this difference, more especially
As her consent, too lightly now, she thought,
With hopes as different had been strangely bought;
And many a time the pain of that neglect
Would strike in blushes o'er her self-respect:
But since the ill was cureless, she applied
With busy virtue to resume her pride,
Hoping to value her submissive heart
On playing well a patriot daughter's part,
And trying new-found duties to prefer
To what a father might have owed to her.
The very day too when her first surprise
Was full, kind tears had come into her eyes
On finding, by his care, her private room
Furnish'd, like magic, from her own at home;
The very books and all transported there,
The leafy tapestry, and the crimson chair,

The lute, the glass that told the shedding hours,
The little vase of silver for the flowers,
The frame for broidering, with a piece half done,
And the white falcon, basking in the sun,
Who, when he saw her, sidled on his stand,
And twined his neck against her loving hand.
But what had touch'd her nearest, was the thought,
That if 'twere destin'd for her to be brought
To a sweet mother's bed, the joy would be
Giovanni's too, and his her family:—
He seem'd already father of her child,
And on the nestling pledge in patient thought she smil'd.
Yet then a pang would cross her, and the red
In either downward cheek startle and spread,
To think that he, who was to have such part
In joys like these, had never shar'd her heart;
But back she chas'd it with a sigh austere;
And did she chance, at times like these, to hear
Her husband's footstep, she would haste the more,
And with a double smile open the door,
And hope his day had worn a happy face;
Ask how his soldiers pleas'd him, or the chase,
Or what new court had sent to win his sovereign grace.

The prince, at this, would bend on her an eye
Cordial enough, and kiss her tenderly;
Nor, to say truth, was he in general slow
To accept attentions, flattering to bestow;
But then meantime he took no generous pains,
By mutual pleasing, to secure his gains;
He enter'd not, in turn, in her delights,
Her books, her flowers, her love of all sweet sights;
Nay, scarcely her sweet singing minded he,
Unless his pride was rous'd by company;
Or when to please him, after martial play,
She strain'd her lute to some old fiery lay
Of fierce Orlando, or of Ferumbras,
Or Ryan's cloak, or how by the red grass
In battle you might know where Richard was.*

Yet all the while, no doubt, however stern
Or cold at times, he thought he lov'd in turn,
And that the joy he took in her sweet ways,
The pride he felt when she excited praise,
In short, the enjoyment of his own good pleasure,
Was thanks enough, and passion beyond measure.

* "Sir Ferumbras" was a knight of Romance. The cloak of King Ryan, or Ryence, was said to be made of the beards of his royal brethren, whom he had conquered. Richard is Richard Cœur de Lion, a terrible knight *de facto* as well as in fable.

She, had she lov'd him, might have thought so too,
For what will love not think its idol's due,
Till long neglect, and utter selfishness,
Shame the fond pride it takes in its distress?
But ill prepar'd was she, in her hard lot,
To fancy merit where she found it not,—
She, who had been beguil'd,—she, who was made
Within a gentle bosom to be laid,—
To bless and to be bless'd,—to be heart-bare
To one who found his better'd likeness there,—
To think for ever with him, like a bride,—
To haunt his eye, like grace personified,—
To double his delight, to share his sorrow,
And like a morning beam, wake to him every
morrow.

Paulo, meantime, who ever since the day
He saw her sweet looks bending o'er his way,
Had stored them up, unconsciously, as graces
By which to judge all other forms and faces,
Had learnt, I know not how, the secret snare,
Which gave her up, that evening, to his care.
Some babbler, may be, of old Guido's court,
Or foolish friend had told him, half in sport,
But to his heart the fatal flattery went,
And grave he grew, and inwardly intent,

And ran back, in his mind, with sudden spring,
Look, gesture, smile, speech, silence, everything,
E'en what before had seemed indifference,
And read them over in another sense.
Then would he blush with sudden self-disdain,
To think how fanciful he was, and vain;
And with half angry, half regretful sigh,
Tossing his chin, and feigning a free eye,
Breathe off, as 'twere, the idle tale, and look
About him for his falcon or his book,
Scorning that ever he should entertain
One thought that in the end might give his brother pain.

This start, however, came so often round,
So often fell he in deep thought, and found
Occasion to renew his carelessness,
Yet every time the power grown less and less,
That by degrees, half wearied, half inclin'd,
To the sweet struggling image he resign'd;
And merely, as he thought, to make the best
Of what by force would twine about his breast,
Began to bend down his admiring eyes
On all her touching looks and qualities,
Turning their shapely sweetness every way,
Till 'twas his food and habit day by day,

And she became companion of his thought;
Silence her gentleness before him brought,
Society her sense, reading her books,
Music her voice, every sweet thing her looks,
Which sometimes seem'd, when he sat fix'd awhile,
To steal beneath his eyes with upward smile:
And then he would suppose her all his own,
Himself the bridegroom, her his right alone,
And dote on the sweet gaze, till ending with a groan.

Thus daily went he on, gathering sweet pain
About his fancy, till it thrill'd again;
And if his brother's image, less and less,
Startled him up from his new idleness,
'Twas not,—he fancied,—that he reason'd worse,
Or felt less scorn of wrong, but the reverse.
That one should think of injuring another,
Or trenching on his peace,—this, too, a brother,—
And all from selfishness and pure weak will,
To him seem'd marvellous and impossible.
'Tis true, thought he, one being more there was,
Who might meantime have weary hours to pass,—
One weaker too to bear them,—and for whom?—
No matter;—wishing could reverse no doom;
And so he sigh'd and smil'd, as if one thought
Of paltering could suppose that *he* was to be caught.

Yet if she lov'd him, common gratitude,
If not, a sense of what was fair and good,
Besides his new relationship and right,
Would make him wish to please her all he might;
And as to thinking,—where could be the harm,
Provided he kept close the secret charm?
He wish'd not to himself another's blessing,
But then he might console for not possessing;
And glorious things there were, which but to see
And not admire, was mere stupidity:
He might as well object to his own eyes
For loving to behold the fields and skies,
His neighbour's grove, or story-painted hall;
'Twas but the taste for what was natural;
Only his fav'rite thought was loveliest of them all.

Concluding thus, and happier that he knew
His ground so well, near and more near he drew;
And sanction'd by his brother's manner, spent
Hours by her side, as happy as well-meant.
He read with her, he rode, he train'd her hawk,
He spent still evenings in delightful talk,
While she sat busy at her broidery frame;
Or touch'd the lute with her, and when they came
To some fine part, prepar'd her for the pleasure,
And then with double smile stole on the measure.

Then at the tournament,—who there but she
Made him more gallant still than formerly,
Couch o'er his tighten'd lance with double force,
Pass like the wind, sweeping down man and horse,
And franklier then than ever, midst the shout
And dancing trumpets ride, uncover'd, round about?
His brother only, more than hitherto,
He would avoid, or sooner let subdue,
Partly from something strange unfelt before,
Partly because Giovanni sometimes wore
A knot his bride had worked him, green and gold;—
For in all things with nature did she hold,
And while 'twas being work'd, her fancy was
Of sunbeams mingling with a tuft of grass.

Francesca from herself but ill could hide
What pleasure now was added to her side,—
How placidly, yet fast, the days flew on
Thus link'd in white and loving unison,
And how the chair he sat in, and the room,
Began to look, when he had fail'd to come.
But as she better knew the cause than he,
She seem'd to have the more necessity
For struggling hard, and rousing all her pride;
And so she did at first; she even tried

To feel a sort of anger at his care;
But these extremes brought but a kind despair
And then she only spoke more sweetly to him,
And found her failing eyes give looks that melted
through him.

Giovanni too, who felt reliev'd indeed
To see another to his place succeed,
Or rather filling up some trifling hours,
Better spent elsewhere, and beneath his powers,
Left the new tie to strengthen day by day,
Talk'd less and less, and longer kept away,
Secure in his self-love and sense of right,
That he was welcome most, come when he might.
And doubtless, they, in their still finer sense,
With added care repaid this confidence,
Turning their thoughts from his abuse of it,
To what on their own parts was graceful and was fit.

Ah now, ye gentle pair,—now think awhile,
Now, while ye still can think, and still can smile;
Now, while your generous hearts have not been
griev'd
Perhaps with something not to be retriev'd,
And ye have in ye still the power of gladness,
From self-resentment free, and recollected madness!

So did they think;—but partly from delay,
Partly from fancied ignorance of the way,
But most from feeling the bare thought require
Fresh mutual comfort, dangerous to desire,
They scarcely tried to see each other less,
And did but meet with deeper tenderness,
Living, from day to day, as they were used,
Only with graver thoughts, and smiles reduced,
And sighs more frequent, which, when one would heave,
The other long'd to start up and receive.
For whether some suspicion now had cross'd
Giovanni's mind, or whether he had lost
More of his temper lately, he would treat
His wife with petty scorns, and starts of heat,
And, to his own omissions proudly blind,
O'erlook the pains she took to make him kind,
And yet be angry, if he thought them less;
He found reproaches in her meek distress,
Forcing her silent tears, and then resenting,
Then almost angrier grown from half repenting,
And hinting at the last, that some there were
Better perhaps than he, and tastefuller,
And these, for what he knew,—he little cared,—
Might please her, and be pleas'd, though he despair'd.

Then would he quit the room, and half disdain
His tongue for yielding to so harsh a strain,
And venting thus his temper on a woman;
Yet not the more for that changed he in common,
Or took more pains to please her, and be near:—
What! should he truckle to a woman's tear?

At times like these the princess tried to shun
The face of Paulo as too kind a one;
And shutting up her tears with final sigh,
Would walk into the air, and see the sky,
And feel about her all the garden green,
And hear the birds that shot the covert boughs
between.

A noble range it was, of many a rood,
Wall'd round with trees, and ending in a wood:
Indeed the whole was leafy; and it had
A winding stream about it, clear and glad,
That danced from shade to shade, and on its
way
Seem'd smiling with delight to feel the day.
There was the pouting rose, both red and white,
The flamy heart's-ease, flush'd with purple light,
Blush-hiding strawberry, sunny-coloured box,
Hyacinth, handsome with his clustering locks,

The lady lily, looking gently down,
Pure lavender, to lay in bridal gown,
The daisy, lovely on both sides,—in short,
All the sweet cups to which the bees resort,
With plots of grass, and perfum'd walks between
Of sweetbrier, honeysuckle, and jessamine,
With orange, whose warm leaves so finely suit,
And look as if they shade a golden fruit;
And 'midst the flowers, turf'd round beneath a shade
Of circling pines, a babbling fountain play'd,
And 'twixt their shafts you saw the water bright,
Which through the darksome tops glimmer'd with showering light.
So now you walk'd beside an odorous bed
Of gorgeous hues, purple, and gold, and red;
And now turn'd off into a leafy walk,
Close and continuous, fit for lovers' talk;
And now pursued the stream, and as you trod
Onward and onward o'er the velvet sod,
Felt on your face an air, watery and sweet,
And a new sense in your soft-lighting feet;
And then perhaps you enter'd upon shades,
Pillow'd with dells and uplands 'twixt the glades,
Through which the distant palace, now and then,
Looked lordly forth with many-window'd ken

A land of trees, which reaching round about,
In shady blessing stretch'd their old arms out,
With spots of sunny opening, and with nooks
To lie and read in, sloping into brooks,
Where at her drink you startled the slim deer,
Retreating lightly with a lovely fear.
And all about, the birds kept leafy house,
And sung and darted in and out the boughs;
And all about, a lovely sky of blue
Clearly was felt, or down the leaves laugh'd
through;
And here and there, in every part, were seats,
Some in the open walks, some in retreats
With bowering leaves o'erhead, to which the eye
Look'd up half sweetly and half awfully,—
Places of nestling green, for poets made,
Where, when the sunshine struck a yellow shade,
The rugged trunks, to inward-peeping sight,
Throng'd in dark pillars up the gold green light.

But 'twixt the wood and flowery walks, halfway,
And form'd of both, the loveliest portion lay,
A spot, that struck you like enchanted ground:—
It was a shallow dell, set in a mound
Of sloping shrubs, that mounted by degrees,
The birch and poplar mixed with heavier trees;

Down by whose roots, descending darkly still,
(You saw it not, but heard) there gush'd a rill,
Whose low sweet talking seem'd as if it said
Something eternal to that happy shade.
The ground within was lawn, with plots of flowers
Heap'd towards the centre, and with citron bowers;
And in the midst of all, cluster'd with bay
And myrtle, and just gleaming to the day,
Lurk'd a pavilion,—a delicious sight,—
Small, marble, well-proportion'd, mellowy white,
With yellow vine-leaves sprinkled,—but no more,—
And a young orange either side the door.
The door was to the wood, forward and square,
The rest was domed at top, and circular;
And through the dome the only light came in,
Tinged, as it enter'd, with the vine-leaves thin.

It was a beauteous piece of ancient skill,
Spar'd from the rage of war, and perfect still;
By some suppos'd the work of fairy hands,
Fam'd for luxurious taste, and choice of lands,—
Alcina, or Morgana,—who from fights
And errant fame inveigled amorous knights,
And liv'd with them in a long round of blisses,
Feasts, concerts, baths, and bower-enshaded kisses.

But 'twas a temple, as its sculpture told,
Built to the Nymphs that haunted there of old;
For o'er the door was carv'd a sacrifice
By girls and shepherds brought, with reverent eyes,
Of sylvan drinks and foods, simple and sweet,
And goats with struggling horns and planted feet:
And round about, ran, on a line with this
In like relief, a world of Pagan bliss,
That show'd, in various scenes, the nymphs themselves;
Some by the water side on bowery shelves
Leaning at will,—some in the water sporting
With sides half swelling forth, and looks of courting,—
Some in a flowery dell, hearing a swain
Play on his pipe, till the hills ring again,—
Some tying up their long moist hair,—some sleeping
Under the trees, with fauns and satyrs peeping,—
Or, sidelong-eyed, pretending not to see,
The latter in the brakes come creepingly,
While from their careless urns, lying aside
In the long grass, the straggling waters slide.
Never, be sure, before or since was seen
A summer-house so fine in such a nest of green.

All the green garden, flower-bed, shade, and plot,
Francesca lov'd, but most of all this spot.

Whenever she walk'd forth, wherever went
About the grounds, to this at last she bent:
Here she had brought a lute and a few books;
Here would she lie for hours, with grateful looks,
Thanking at heart the sunshine and the leaves,
The vernal rain-drops counting from the eaves,
And all that promising, calm smile we see
In nature's face, when we look patiently.
Then would she think of heaven; and you might hear
Sometimes, when every thing was hush'd and clear,
Her gentle voice from out those shades emerging,
Singing the evening anthem to the Virgin.
The gardeners and the rest, who serv'd the place,
And blest whenever they beheld her face,
Knelt when they heard it, bowing and uncover'd,
And felt as if in air some sainted beauty hover'd.

Oh weak old man! Love, saintliest life, and she,
Might all have dwelt together, but for thee.

One day,—'twas on an early autumn noon,
When the cicàlé* cease to mar the tune
Of birds and brooks, and morning work has done
And shades have heavy outlines in the sun,

* The *cicala* (*cicale* in the plural,—the *cicada* of Virgil and *tettix* of Anacreon) might be called the tree-cricket, from the noise which it makes, if science warranted the term.

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The princess came to her accustom'd bower
To get her, if she could, a soothing hour,
Trying, as she was used, to leave her cares
Without, and slumberously enjoy the airs,
And the low-talking leaves, and that cool light
The vines let in, and all that hushing sight
Of closing wood seen through the opening door,
And distant plash of waters tumbling o'er,
And smell of citron blooms, and fifty luxuries more.

She tried, as usual, for the trial's sake,
For even that diminish'd her heart-ache;
And never yet, how ill soe'er at ease,
Came she for nothing 'midst the flowers and trees.
Yet how it was she knew not, but that day,
She seem'd to feel too lightly borne away,—
Too much reliev'd—too much inclin'd to draw
A careless joy from every thing she saw,
And looking round her with a new-born eye,
As if some tree of knowledge had been nigh,
To taste of nature, primitive and free,
And bask at ease in her heart's liberty.

Painfully clear those rising thoughts appear'd,
With something dark at bottom that she fear'd;

And turning from the trees her thoughtful look,
She reach'd o'er-head, and took her down a book,
And fell to reading with as fix'd an air,
As though she had been rapt since morning there.

'Twas Launcelot of the Lake, a bright romance,
That like a trumpet made the spirits dance,
Yet had a softer note that shook still more;—
She had begun it but the day before,
And read with a full heart, half sweet, half sad,
How old King Ban was spoil'd of all he had
But one fair castle: how one summer's day
With his fair queen and child he went away
To ask the great King Arthur for assistance;
How reaching by himself a hill at distance
He turn'd to give his castle a last look,
And saw its far white face: and how a smoke,
As he was looking, burst in volumes forth,
And good King Ban saw all that he was worth,
And his fair castle, burning to the ground,
So that his wearied pulse felt over-wound,
And he lay down, and said a prayer apart
For those he lov'd, and broke his poor old heart.
Then read she of the queen with her young child,
How she came up, and nearly had gone wild,

And how in journeying on in her despair,
She reach'd a lake and met a lady there,
Who pitied her, and took the baby sweet
Into her arms, when lo, with closing feet
She sprang up all at once, like bird from brake,
And vanish'd with him underneath the lake.
The mother's feelings we as well may pass:—
The fairy of the place that lady was,
And Launcelot (so the boy was call'd) became
Her inmate, till in search of knightly fame
He went to Arthur's court, and play'd his part
So rarely, and display'd so frank a heart,
That what with all his charms of look and limb,
The Queen Geneura fell in love with him:
And here, such interest in the tale she took,
Francesca's eyes went deeper in the book.

Ready she sat with one hand to turn o'er
The leaf, to which her thoughts ran on before,
The other propping her white brow, and
throwing
Its ringlets out, under the skylight glowing.
So sat she fix'd; and so observ'd was she
Of one, who at the door stood tenderly,—
Paulo,—who from a window seeing her
Go straight across the lawn, and guessing where,

Had thought she was in tears, and found, that day,
His usual efforts vain to keep away.

"May I come in?" said he:—it made her start,—
That smiling voice;—she colour'd, press'd her heart
A moment, as for breath, and then with free
And usual tone said, "O yes,—certainly."

There's wont to be, at conscious times like these,
An affectation of a bright-eyed ease,
An air of something quite serene and sure,
As if to seem so, were to be, secure:
With this the lovers met, with this they spoke,
With this they sat down to the self-same book,
And Paulo, by degrees, gently embrac'd
With one permitted arm her lovely waist;
And both their cheeks, like peaches on a tree,
Came with a touch together, thrillingly;
And o'er the book they hung, and nothing said,
And every lingering page grew longer as they
read.

As thus they sat, and felt, with leaps of heart,
Their colour change, they came upon the part
Where fond Geneura, with her flame long nurst,
Smil'd upon Launcelot when he kiss'd her first:—

That touch, at last, through every fibre slid;
And Paulo turn'd, scarce knowing what he did,
Only he felt he could no more dissemble,
And in his arms she wept, all in a tremble.

Oh thou unhappy father! Woes in store
Await thy craft.—That day they read no more.

CANTO IV.

HOW THE BRIDE RETURNED TO RAVENNA.

It has surpris'd me often, as I write,
That I, who have of late known small delight,
Should thus pursue a mournful theme, and make
My very solace of distress partake;
Now, too, while rains autumnal, as I sing,
Wash the dull bars, chilling my sicklied wing,
And all the climate presses on my sense;*
But thoughts it furnishes of things far hence,

* The greater portion of this poem was written in the prison to which the author, then editor of *The Examiner*, was condemned for some severe remarks on the Prince Regent, at a time when freedom of speech was not allowed to the press as abundantly and wisely as it is now; and the state of his health was such as to render confinement more than ordinarily injurious.

And leafy dreams affords me, and a feeling
Which I should else disdain, tear-dipp'd and healing;
And shows me, more than what it first design'd,
How little upon earth our home we find,
Or close th' intended course of erring humankind.

Sorrow, they say, to one with true-touch'd ear,
Is but the discord of a warbling sphere,
A lurking contrast, which though harsh it be,
Distils the next note more deliciously.
'Tis hard to think it, till the note be heard,
A joy too often and too long deferr'd.
Yet come it will, hereafter, if not here;
And good meantime comes best from many a tear.
Tales like the present, of a real woe,
From bitter seed to balmy fruitage grow:
The woes were few, were brief, have long been past;
The warnings they bequeath spread wide and last.
And even they, whose shatter'd hearts and frames
Make them unhappiest of poetic names,
What are they, if they know their calling high,
But crush'd perfumes exhaling to the sky?
Or weeping clouds, that but a while are seen,
Yet keep the earth they haste to, bright and green?

A month has pass'd;—how pass'd, remains unknown;—
But never now, companion'd or alone,
Comes the sweet lady to her summer bower.
Paulo did once, arm'd with the sterner power
Of a man's grief. He saw it; but how look'd
The bow'r at him? His presence felt rebuk'd.
It seem'd as if the hopes of his young heart,
His kindness, and his generous scorn of art,
Had all been a mere dream, or at the best
A vain negation that could stand no test,
And that on waking from his idle fit,
He found himself (how could he think of it!)
A selfish boaster, and a hypocrite.

That thought before had griev'd him; but the pain
Cut sharp and sudden, now it came again.
Sick thoughts of late had made his body sick,
And this, in turn, to them grown strangely quick;
And pale he stood, and seem'd to burst all o'er
Into moist anguish never felt before,
And with a dreadful certainty to know
His peace was gone, and all to come was woe.
Francesca too,—the being made to bless,—
Destin'd by him to the same wretchedness,—

It seem'd as if such whelming thoughts must find
Some props for them, or he should lose his mind.
And find he did, not what the worse disease
Of want of charity calls sophistries,—
Nor what can cure a generous heart of pain,—
But humble guesses, helping to sustain.
He thought, with quick philosophy, of things
Rarely found out except through sufferings,—
Of habit, circumstance, design, degree,
Merit, and will, and thoughtful charity;
And these, although they push'd down, as they rose
His self-respect, and all those morning shows
Of true and perfect, which his youth had built,
Push'd with them too the worst of others' guilt;
And furnish'd him, at least, with something kind,
On which to lean a sad and startled mind:
Till youth, and natural vigour, and the dread
Of self-betrayal, and a thought that spread
From time to time in gladness o'er his face,
That she he lov'd could have done nothing base,
Help'd to restore him to his usual life,
Though grave at heart, and with himself at strife;
And he would rise betimes, day after day,
And mount his favourite horse, and ride away
Miles in the country, looking round about,
As he glode by, to force his thoughts without

And when he found it vain, would pierce the shade
Of some enwooded field or closer glade,
And there dismounting, idly sit, and sigh,
Or pluck the grass beside him with vague eye,
And almost envy the poor beast, that went
Cropping it, here and there, with dumb content.
But thus, at least, he exercis'd his blood,
And kept it livelier than inaction could;
And thus he earn'd for his thought-working head
The power of sleeping when he went to bed,
And was enabled still to wear away
That task of loaded hearts, another day.

But she, the gentler frame,—the shaken flower,—
The daughter, sacrified in evil hour,—
The struggling, virtue-loving, fallen she,
Wife that still was, and mother that might be,—
What could she do, unable thus to keep
Her strength alive, but sit, and think, and weep,
For ever stooping o'er her broidery frame,
Half blind, and longing till the night-time came,
When worn and wearied out with the day's sorrow
She might be still and senseless till the morrow!

And oh, the morrow, how it used to rise!
How would she open her despairing eyes,

And from the sense of the long lingering day,
Rushing upon her, almost turn away,
Loathing the light, and groan to sleep again!
Then sighing once for all, to meet the pain,
She would get up in haste, and try to pass
The time in patience, wretched as it was;
Till patience self, in her distemper'd sight,
Would seem a charm to which she had no right,
And trembling at the lip, and pale with fears,
She shook her head, and burst into fresh tears.
Old comforts now were not at her command:
The falcon stoop'd in vain to court her hand;
The flowers were not refresh'd; the very light,
The sunshine, seem'd as if it shone at night;
The least noise smote her like a sudden wound;
And did she hear but the remotest sound
Of song or instrument about the place,
She hid with both her hands her streaming face.
But worse to her than all (and oh! thought she,
That ever, ever, such a worse should be!)
The sight of infant was, or child at play;
Then would she turn, and move her lips, and pray,
That heaven would take her, if it pleas'd, away.

Meantime her lord, who by her long distress
Seem'd wrought, at first, to some true tenderness,

Which, to his sore amaze, did but appear
To vex her more than when he was severe,
Began, with helps of wondering tongues, to see
In moods (he thought) so bent to disagree,
And in all else she look'd and said, and all
His brother did, who now in bower or hall
Seldom dar'd trust his still ingenuous face,—
The secret of a sure and dire disgrace.
What a convulsion was the first belief!
Astonishment, abasement, profound grief,
Self-pity, almost tears, thence self-disdain
For stooping to so weak and vile a pain,
With mad impatience to surmount the blow
In some retributive and bloody woe,—
All rush'd upon him, like the sudden view
Of some new world, foreign to all he knew,
Where he had waked and found the dreams of madmen true.

If any lingering hope that he was wrong,
Pride's self would needs hold fast, 'twas not so long.
One dawn, as sullenly awake he lay,
Considering what to do the approaching day,
He heard his wife say something in her sleep:—
He shook, and listen'd;—she began to weep,

And moaning louder, seem'd to shake her head,
Till all at once articulate, she said,
"He loves his brother yet.—Dear heaven, 'twas I—"
Then lower voiced—"Only—*do* let me die."

With the worst impulse of his whole fierce life
The husband glared, one moment, on his wife:
Then grasp'd a crucifix, and look'd no more.
He dresses, takes his sword, and through the door
Goes, like a spirit, in the morning air;—
His squire awak'd attends; and they repair,
Silent as wonder, to his brother's room:—
His squire calls him up too; and forth they come.

The brothers meet,—Giovanni scarce in breath,
Yet firm and fierce, Paulo as pale as death.
The husband, motioning while turning round,
To lead the way, said, "To the tilting ground."
"*There*, brother," answer'd Paulo, while despair
Rush'd on his face. "Yes, *brother*," cried he, "there."
The word smote crushingly; and paler still,
He bowed, and moved his lips, as waiting on his will.

Paulo's sad squire has fetch'd another sword,
And down the stairs they bend without a word;

Then issue forth in the moist-striking air,
And towards the tilt-yard cross a planted square.

'Twas a fresh autumn dawn, vigorous and chill;
The lightsome morning star was sparkling still,
Ere it turn'd in to heaven; and far away
Appear'd the streaky fingers of the day.
An opening in the trees took Paulo's eye,
As mute his brother and himself went by:
It was a glimpse of the tall wooded mound,
That screen'd Francesca's favourite spot of ground:
Massy and dark in the clear twilight stood,
As in a lingering sleep, the solemn wood;
And through the bowering arch, which led inside,
He almost fancied once, that he descried
A marble gleam, where the pavilion lay—
Starting he turn'd, and look'd another way.

Arriv'd, and the two squires withdrawn apart,
The prince spoke low, as with a labouring heart,
And said, "Before you answer what you can,
"I wish to tell you, as a gentleman,
"That what you may confess," (and as he spoke
His voice with breathless and pale passion broke,)
"Will implicate no person known to you,
"More than disquiet in its sleep may do."

Paulo's heart bled; he waved his hand, and bent
His head a little in acknowledgment.
"Say then, sir, if you can," continued he,
"One word will do—you have not injur'd me:
"Tell me but so, and I shall bear the pain
"Of having asked a question I disdain;—
"But utter nothing, if not that one word;
"And meet me this."—He stopp'd, and drew his sword.

Paulo seem'd firmer grown from his despair;
He drew a little back; and with the air
Of one who would do well, not from a right
To be well thought of, but in guilt's despite,
"I am," said he, "I know,—'twas not so ever—
"But fight for it! and with a brother! Never."

"How!" with uplifted voice, exclaim'd the other;
"The vile pretence! who ask'd you—with a *brother?*
"Brother! O wretch! O traitor to the name!
"Dash'd in thy teeth, and cursed be the claim.
"What! wound it deepest? strike me to the core,
"Me, and the hopes which I can have no more,
"And then, as never brother of mine could,
"Shrink from the letting a few drops of blood?"

"It is not so," cried Paulo, "'tis not so;
"But I would save you from a further woe."

"A further woe, recreant!" retorted he:
"What woe? what further? yes, one still may be:
"Save me the woe, save me the dire disgrace,
"Of seeing one of an illustrious race
"Bearing about a heart, which fear'd no law,
"And a vile sword, which yet he dared not draw."

"Brother, dear brother!" Paulo cried, "nay, nay,
"I'll use the word no more;—but *peace*, I pray!
"You trample on a soul, sunk at your feet!"
"'Tis false!" exclaim'd the prince; "'tis a retreat
"To which you fly, when manly wrongs pursue,
"And fear the grave you bring a woman to."

A sudden start, yet not of pride or pain,
Paulo here gave; he seem'd to rise again;
And taking off his cap without a word,
He drew, and kiss'd the cross'd hilt of his sword,
Looking to heaven;—then with a steady brow,
Mild, yet not feeble, said, "I'm ready now."

"A noble word!" exclaim'd the prince, and smote
The ground beneath him with his firming foot:—

The squires rush in between, in their despair,
But both the princes tell them to beware.
"Back, Gerard," cries Giovanni; "I require
"No teacher here, but an observant squire."
"Back, Tristan," Paulo cries; "fear not for me;
"All is not worst that so appears to thee.
"And here," said he, "a word." The poor youth came,
Starting in sweeter tears to hear his name:
A whisper, and a charge there seem'd to be,
Giv'n to him kindly yet inflexibly:
Both squires then drew apart again, and stood
Mournfully both, each in his several mood,—
One half in rage, as to himself he speaks,
The other with the tears streaming down both his cheeks.

The prince attack'd with nerve in every limb,
Nor seem'd the other slow to match with him;
Yet as the fight grew warm, 'twas evident,
One fought to wound, the other to prevent:
Giovanni press'd, and push'd, and shifted aim,
And play'd his weapon like a tongue of flame;
Paulo retir'd, and warded, turn'd on heel,
And led him, step by step, round like a wheel.
Sometimes indeed he feign'd an angrier start,
But still relaps'd, and play'd his former part.

"What!" cried Giovanni, who grew still more
fierce,
"Fighting in sport? Playing your cart and tierce?"

"Not so, my prince," said Paulo; "have a care
"How you think so, or I shall wound you there."
He stamp'd, and watching as he spoke the word,
Drove, with his breast, full on his brother's sword.

'Twas done. He stagger'd; and in falling prest
Giovanni's foot with his right hand and breast:
Then on his elbow turn'd, and raising t'other,
He smil'd and said, "No fault of yours, my brother;
"An accident—a slip—the finishing one
"To errors by that poor old man begun.
"You'll not—you'll not"—his heart leap'd on before,
And chok'd his utterance; but he smil'd once more,
For as his hand grew lax, he felt it prest;—
And so, his dim eyes sliding into rest,
He turn'd him round, and dropt with hiding head,
And in that loosening drop his spirit fled.

But noble passion touch'd Giovanni's soul;
He seem'd to feel the clouds of habit roll
Away from him at once, with all their scorn,
And out he spoke, in the clear air of morn:—

"By heaven, by heaven, and all the better part
"Of us poor creatures with a human heart,
"I trust we reap at last, as well as plough;—
"But there, meantime, my brother, liest thou;
"And, Paulo, thou wert the completest knight,
"That ever rode with banner to the fight;
"And thou wert the most beautiful to see,
"That ever came in press of chivalry;
"And of a sinful man, thou wert the best,
"That ever for his friend put spear in rest;
"And thou wert the most meek and cordial,
"That ever among ladies ate in hall;
"And thou wert still, for all that bosom gor'd,
"The kindest man that ever struck with sword."

At this the words forsook his tongue; and he,
Who scarcely had shed tears since infancy,
Felt his stern visage thrill, and meekly bow'd
His head, and for his brother wept aloud.

The squires with glimmering tears—Tristan, indeed,
Heart-struck, and hardly able to proceed,—
Double their scarfs about the fatal wound,
And raise the body up to quit the ground.
Giovanni starts; and motioning to take
The way they came, follows his brother back,

And having seen him laid upon the bed,
No further look he gave him, nor tear shed,
But went away, such as he used to be,
With looks of stately will and calm austerity.

Tristan, who when he was to make the best
Of something sad and not to be redress'd,
Could show a heart as firm as it was kind,
Now lock'd his tears up, and seem'd all resign'd,
And to Francesca's chamber took his way,
To tell the message of that mortal day.
He found her ladies, up and down the stairs,
Moving with noiseless caution, and in tears,
And that the news, though to herself unknown,
On its old wings of vulgar haste had flown.
The door, as tenderly as miser's purse,
Was opened by the pale and aged nurse,
Who shaking her old head, and pressing close
Her wither'd lips to keep the tears that rose,
Made signs she guess'd what grief he came about,
And so his arm squeez'd gently, and went out.

The princess, who had pass'd a fearful night,
Toiling with dreams,—fright crowding upon fright,
Had miss'd her husband at that early hour,
And would have ris'n, but found she wanted power.

Yet as her body seem'd to go, her mind
Felt, though in anguish still, strangely resign'd;
And moving not, nor weeping, mute she lay,
Wasting in patient gravity away.
The nurse, sometime before, with gentle creep
Had drawn the curtains, hoping she might sleep:
But suddenly she ask'd, though not with fear,
"Nina, what bustle's that I seem to hear?"
And the poor creature, who the news had heard,
Pretending to be busy, had just stirr'd
Something about the room, and answer'd not a word.

"Who's there?" said that sweet voice, kindly and clear,
Which in its stronger days was joy to hear:—
Its weakness now almost depriv'd the squire
Of his new firmness, but approaching nigher,
"Madam," said he, "'tis I; one who may say,
"He loves his friends more than himself to-day;—
"Tristan."—She paus'd a little, and then said—
"Tristan, my friend, what noise thus haunts my head?
"Something I'm sure has happen'd—tell me what—
'I can bear all, though you may fancy not."
"Madam," replied the squire, "you are, I know,
"All sweetness—pardon me for saying so.

"My master bade me say then," resum'd he,
"That he spoke firmly, when he told it me,—
"That I was also, madam, to your ear
"Firmly to speak, and you firmly to hear,—
"That he was forced this day, whether or no,
"To combat with the prince; and that although
"His noble brother was no fratricide,
"Yet in that fight, and on his sword,—he died."

"I understand," with firmness answer'd she,
More low in voice, but still composedly.
"Now, Tristan—faithful friend—leave me; and take
"This trifle here, and keep it for my sake."

So saying, from the curtains she put forth
Her thin white hand, that held a ring of worth;
And he, with tears no longer to be kept
From quenching his heart's thirst, silently wept,
And kneeling took the ring, and touch'd her hand
To either streaming eye with homage bland,
And looking on it once, gently up started,
And in his reverent stillness so departed.

Her favourite lady then with the old nurse
Return'd, and fearing she must now be worse,

Gently withdrew the curtains, and look'd in:—
O, who that feels one godlike spark within,
Shall bid not earth be just, before 'tis hard, with sin?
There lay she praying, upwardly intent,
Like a fair statue on a monument,
With her two trembling hands together prest,
Palm against palm, and pointing from her breast.
She ceas'd; and turning slowly tow'rds the wall,
They saw her tremble sharply, feet and all,—
Then suddenly be still. Near and more near
They bent with pale inquiry and close ear;—
Her eyes were shut—no motion—not a breath—
The gentle sufferer was at peace in death.

I pass the grief that struck to every face,
And the mute anguish all about that place,
In which the silent people, here and there,
Went soft, as though she still could feel their care.
The gentle-temper'd for a while forgot
Their own distress, or wept the common lot:
The warmer, apter now to take offence,
Yet hush'd as they rebuk'd, and wonder'd whence
Others at such a time could get their want of sense.

Fain would I haste indeed to finish all;
And so at once I reach the funeral.

Private 'twas fancied it must be, though some
Thought that her sire, the poor old duke, would come:
And some were wondering in their pity, whether
The lovers might not have one grave together.
Next day, however, from the palace gate
A blast of trumpets blew, like voice of fate;
And all in sable clad, forth came again
A portion of the former sprightly train;
Gerard was next, and then a rank of friars;
And then, with heralds on each side, two squires,
The one of whom upon a cushion bore
The coroneted helm Prince Paulo wore,
His shield the other;—then there was a space,
And in the middle, with a doubtful pace,
His horse succeeded, plumed and trapp'd in black,
Bearing the sword and banner on his back:
The noble creature, as in state he trod,
Appear'd as if he miss'd his princely load;
And with back-rolling eye and lingering pride,
To hope his master still might come to ride.
Then Tristan, heedless of what pass'd around,
Rode by himself, with eyes upon the ground.
Then heralds in a row: and last of all
Appear'd a hearse, hung with an ermin'd pall,

And bearing on its top, together set,
A prince's and princess's coronet.
Mutely they issued forth, black, slow, dejected,
Nor stopp'd within the walls, as most expected;
But pass'd the gates — the bridge — the last abode,—
And tow'rds Ravenna held their silent road.

The prince, it seems, struck, since his brother's death,
With what he hinted with his dying breath,
And told by others now of all they knew,
Had fix'd at once the course he should pursue;
And from a mingled feeling, which he strove
To hide no longer from his taught self-love,
Of sorrow, shame, resentment, and a sense
Of justice owing to that first offence,
Had, on the day preceding, written word
To the old duke of all that had occurr'd:—
"And though I shall not," (so concluded he,)
"Otherwise touch thine age's misery,
"Yet as I would that both one grave should hide,
"Which can, and must not be, where I reside,
"'Tis fit, though all have something to deplore,
"That he who join'd them once, should keep to part no more."

The wretched father, who, when he had read
This letter, felt it wither his grey head,
And ever since had paced about his room,
Trembling, and seiz'd as with approaching doom,
Had given such orders, as he well could frame,
To meet devoutly whatsoever came;
And as the news immediately took flight,
Few in Ravenna went to sleep that night,
But talk'd the business over, and review'd
All that they knew of her, the fair and good;
And so with wondering sorrow the next day,
Waited till they should see that sad array.

The days were then at close of autumn,—still,
A little rainy, and towards night-fall chill;
There was a fitful, moaning air abroad;
And ever and anon, over the road,
The last few leaves came fluttering from the trees,
Whose shivering life seem'd drawing to the lees.
The people, who from reverence kept at home,
Listen'd till afternoon to hear them come;
And hour on hour went by, and nought was heard
But some chance horseman, or the wind that stirr'd,
Till tow'rds the vesper hour; and then 'twas said
Some heard a voice, which seem'd as if it read;

And others said, that they could hear a sound
Of many horses trampling the moist ground.
Still nothing came,—till on a sudden, just
As the wind open'd in a rising gust,
A voice of chanting rose, and as it spread,
They plainly heard the anthem for the dead.
It was the choristers who went to meet
The train, and now were entering the first street.
Then turn'd aside that city, young and old,
And in their lifted hands the gushing sorrow roll'd.

But of the older people, few could bear
To keep the window, when the train drew near;
And all felt double tenderness to see
The bier approaching, slow and steadily,
On which those two in senseless coldness lay,
Who but a few short months—it seem'd a day—
Had left their walls, lovely in form and mind,
In sunny manhood he,—she first of womankind.

They say, that when Duke Guido saw them come,
Bringing him thus, in that one dismal sum,
The whole amount of all for which his heart
Had sunk the father's in the schemer's part,
He rose, in private where he wept, and seem'd
As though he'd go to them, like one that dream'd,

Right from the window, crying still, "My child!"
And from that day thenceforth he never smil'd.

On that same night, those lovers silently
Were buried in one grave, under a tree.
There, side by side, and hand in hand, they lay
In the green ground:—and on fine nights in May
Young hearts, betroth'd, used to go there, to pray.

HERO AND LEANDER.

CANTO I.

Old is the tale I tell, and yet as young
And warm with life as ever minstrel sung:
Two lovers fill it,—two fair shapes—two souls
Sweet as the last for whom the death-bell tolls:
What matters it how long ago, or where
They liv'd, or whether their young locks of hair,
Like English hyacinths, or Greek, were curl'd?
We hurt the stories of the antique world
By thinking of our school-books, and the wrongs
Done them by pedants and fantastic songs,
Or sculptures, which from Roman "studios" thrown,
Turn back Deucalion's flesh and blood to stone.
Truth is for ever truth, and love is love;
The bird of Venus is the living dove.
Sweet Hero's eyes, three thousand years ago,
Were made precisely like the best we know,

Look'd the same looks, and spoke no other Greek
Than eyes of honey-moons begun last week.
Alas! and the dread shock that stunn'd her brow
Strain'd them as wide as any wretch's now.
I never think of poor Leander's fate,
And how he swam, and how his bride sat late,
And watch'd the dreadful dawning of the light,
But as I would of two that died last night.
So might they now have liv'd, and so have died;
The story's heart, to me, still beats against its side.

Beneath the sun which shines this very hour,
There stood of yore—behold it now—a tow'r,
Half set in trees and leafy luxury,
And through them look'd a window on the sea.
The tow'r is old, but guards a beauteous scene
Of bow'rs, 'twixt purple hills, a gulf of green,
Whose farthest side, from out a lifted grove,
Shows a white temple to the Queen of Love.
Fair is the morn, the soft trees kiss and breathe;
Calm, blue, and glittering is the sea beneath;
And by the window a sweet maiden sits,
Grave with glad thoughts, and watching it by fits,
For o'er that sea, drawn to her with delight,
Her love Leander is to come at night;

To come, not sailing, or with help of oar,
But with his own warm heart and arms—no more—
A naked bridegroom, bound from shore to shore.

A priestess Hero is, an orphan dove,
Lodg'd in that turret of the Queen of Love;
A youth Leander, born across the strait,
Whose wealthy kin deny him his sweet mate,
Beset with spies, and dogg'd with daily spite;
But he has made high compact with delight,
And found a wondrous passage through the weltering night.

So sat she fix'd all day, or now was fain
To rise and move, then sighs, then sits again;
Then tries some work, forgets it, and thinks on,
Wishing with perfect love the time were gone,
And lost to the green trees with their sweet singers,
Taps on the casement's ledge with idle fingers.

An aged nurse had Hero in the place,
An under priestess of an humbler race,
Who partly serv'd, partly kept watch and ward
Over the rest, but no good love debarr'd.
The temple's faith, though serious, never cross'd
Engagements, miss'd to their exchequer's cost

And though this present knot was to remain
Unknown awhile, 'twas bless'd within the fane,
And much good thanks expected in the end
From the dear married daughter, and the wealthy friend.
Poor Hero look'd for no such thanks. Her hand,
But to be held in his, would have giv'n sea and land.

The reverend crone accordingly took care
To do her duty to a time so fair,
Saw all things right, secur'd her own small pay,
(Which brought her luxuries to her dying day,)
And finishing a talk, which with surprise
She saw made grave e'en those goodhumour'd eyes,
Laid up, tow'rds night, her service on the shelf,
And left her nicer mistress to herself.

Hesper meanwhile, the star with amorous eye,
Shot his fine sparkle from the deep blue sky.
A depth of night succeeded, dark, but clear,
Such as presents the hollow starry sphere
Like a high gulf to heaven; and all above
Seems waking to a fervid work of love.
A nightingale, in transport, seem'd to fling
His warble out, and then sit listening:

And ever and anon, amidst the flush
Of the thick leaves, there ran a breezy gush;
And then, from dewy myrtles lately bloom'd,
An odour small, in at the window, fumed.

At last, with twinkle o'er a distant tower,
A star appear'd, that was to show the hour.
The virgin saw; and going to a room
Which held an altar burning with perfume,
Cut off a lock of her dark solid hair,
And laid it, with a little whisper'd prayer,
Before a statue, that of marble bright
Sat smiling downwards o'er the rosy light.
Then at the flame a torch of pine she lit,
And o'er her head anxiously holding it,
Ascended to the roof; and leaning there,
Lifted its light into the darksome air.

The boy beheld,—beheld it from the sea,
And parted his wet locks, and breath'd with glee,
And rose, in swimming, more triumphantly.

Smooth was the sea that night, the lover strong,
And in the springy waves he danc'd along.
He rose, he dipp'd his breast, he aim'd, he cut
With his clear arms, and from before him put

The parting waves, and in and out the air
His shoulders felt, and trail'd his washing hair;
But when he saw the torch, oh, how he sprung,
And thrust his feet against the waves, and flung
The foam behind, as though he scorn'd the sea,
And parted his wet locks, and breath'd with glee,
And rose, and panted, most triumphantly!

Arriv'd at last on shallow ground, he saw
The stooping light, as if in haste, withdraw:
Again it issued just above the door
With a white hand, and vanish'd as before.
Then rising, with a sudden-ceasing sound
Of wateriness, he stood on the firm ground,
And treading up a little slippery bank,
With jutting myrtles mix'd, and verdure dank,
Came to a door ajar,—all hush'd, all blind
With darkness; yet he guess'd who stood behind;
And entering with a turn, the breathless boy
A breathless welcome finds, and words that die
for joy.

CANTO II.

Thus pass'd the summer shadows in delight:
Leander came as surely as the night,
And when the morning woke upon the sea,
It saw him not, for back at home was he.
Sometimes, when it blew fresh, the struggling flare
Seem'd out; but then he knew his Hero's care,
And that she only wall'd it with her cloak;
Brighter again from out the dark it broke.
Sometimes the night was almost clear as day,
Wanting no torch; and then, with easy play,
He dipp'd along beneath the silver moon,
Placidly heark'ning to the water's tune.
The people round the country, who from far
Used to behold the light, thought it a star,
Set there perhaps by Venus as a wonder,
To mark the favourite maiden who slept under.
Therefore they trod about the grounds by day
Gently; and fishermen at night, they say,
With reverence kept aloof, cutting their silent way.

But autumn now was over; and the crane
Began to clang against the coming rain,

And peevish winds ran cutting o'er the sea,
Which oft return'd a face of enmity.
The gentle girl, before he went away,
Would look out sadly toward the cold-eyed day
And often beg him not to come that night;
But still he came, and still she bless'd his sight;
And so, from day to day, he came and went,
Till time had almost made her confident.

One evening, as she sat, twining sweet bay
And myrtle garlands for a holiday,
And watch'd at intervals the dreary sky,
In which the dim sun held a languid eye,
She thought with such a full and quiet sweetness
Of all Leander's love and his completeness,
All that he was, and said, and look'd, and dared,
His form, his step, his noble head full-hair'd,
And how she lov'd him, as a thousand might,
And yet he earn'd her still thus night by night,
That the sharp pleasure mov'd her like a grief,
And tears came dropping with their meek relief.

Meantime the sun had sunk; the hilly mark,
Across the straits, mix'd with the mightier dark,

And night came on. All noises by degrees
Were hush'd,—the fisher's call, the birds, the trees,
All but the washing of the eternal seas.

Hero look'd out, and trembling augur'd ill,
The darkness held its breath so very still.
But yet she hop'd he might arrive before
The storm began, or not be far from shore;
And crying, as she stretch'd forth in the air,
" Bless him !" she turn'd, and said a tearful prayer,
And mounted to the tower, and shook the torch's flare.

But he, Leander, almost half across,
Threw his blithe locks behind him with a toss,
And hail'd the light victoriously, secure
Of clasping his kind love, so sweet and sure;
When suddenly, a blast, as if in wrath,
Sheer from the hills, came headlong on his path
Then started off; and driving round the sea,
Dashed up the panting waters roaringly.
The youth at once was thrust beneath the main
With blinded eyes, but quickly rose again,
And with a smile at heart, and stouter pride,
Surmounted, like a god, the rearing tide.

But what? The torch gone out! So long too! See,
He thinks it comes! Ah, yes,—'tis she! 'tis she!
Again he springs; and though the winds arise
Fiercer and fiercer, swims with ardent eyes;
And always, though with ruffian waves dash'd hard,
Turns thither with glad groan his stout regard;
And always, though his sense seems wash'd away,
Emerges, fighting tow'rds the cordial ray.

But driven about at last, and drench'd the while,
The noble boy loses that inward smile:
For now, from one black atmosphere, the rain
Sweeps into stubborn mixture with the main;
And the brute wind, unmuffling all its roar,
Storms;—and the light, gone out, is seen no more.

Then dreadful thoughts of death, of waves heap'd on him,
And friends, and parting daylight, rush upon him.
He thinks of prayers to Neptune and his daughters,
And Venus, Hero's queen, sprung from the waters;
And then of Hero only,—how she fares,
And what she'll feel, when the blank morn appears;

And at that thought he stiffens once again
His limbs, and pants, and strains, and climbs,—in vain.
Fierce draughts he swallows of the wilful wave,
His tossing hands are lax, his blind look grave,
Till the poor youth (and yet no coward he)
Spoke once her name, and yielding wearily,
Wept in the middle of the scornful sea.

I need not tell how Hero, when her light
Would burn no longer, pass'd that dreadful night;
How she exclaim'd, and wept, and could not sit
One instant in one place; nor how she lit
The torch a hundred times, and when she found
'Twas all in vain, her gentle head turn'd round
Almost with rage; and in her fond despair
She tried to call him through the deafening air.

But when he came not,—when from hour to hour
He came not,—though the storm had spent its power,
And when the casement, at the dawn of light,
Began to show a square of ghastly white,
She went up to the tower, and straining out
To search the seas, downwards, and round about,

She saw, at last,—she saw her lord indeed
Floating, and wash'd about, like a vile weed;
On which such strength of passion and dismay
Seiz'd her, and such an impotence to stay,
That from the turret, like a stricken dove,
With fluttering arms she leap'd, and join'd her drowned love.

THE PANTHER.

THE panther leap'd to the front of his lair,
And stood with a foot up, and snuff'd the air;
He quiver'd his tongue from his panting mouth,
And look'd with a yearning towards the south;
For he scented afar in the coming breeze
News of the gums and their blossoming trees;
And out of Armenia that same day
He and his race came bounding away.
Over the mountains and down to the plains
Like Bacchus's panthers with wine in their veins,
They came where the woods wept odorous rains;
And there, with a quivering, every beast
Fell to his old Pamphylian feast.

The people who liv'd not far away,
Heard the roaring on that same day;
And they said, as they lay in their carpeted rooms,
The panthers are come, and are drinking the gums:
And some of them going with swords and spears
To gather their share of the rich round tears,

The panther I spoke of follow'd them back;
And dumbly they let him tread close in the track,
And lured him after them into the town;
And then they let the portcullis down
And took the panther, which happened to be
The largest was seen in all Pamphily.

By every one there was the panther admir'd,
So fine was his shape and so sleekly attir'd,
And such an air, both princely and swift,
He had, when giving a sudden lift
To his mighty paw, he'd turn at a sound,
And so stand panting and looking around,
As if he attended a monarch crown'd.
And truly, they wonder'd the more to behold
About his neck a collar of gold,
On which was written, in characters broad,
"Arsaces the king to the Nysian God."
So they tied to the collar a golden chain,
Which made the panther a captive again,
And by degrees he grew fearful and still,
As though he had lost his lordly will.

But now came the spring, when free-born love
Calls up nature in forest and grove,

And makes each thing leap forth, and be
Loving, and lovely, and blithe as he.
The panther he felt the thrill of the air,
And he gave a leap up, like that at his lair;
He felt the sharp sweetness more strengthen his veins
Ten times than ever the spicy rains,
And ere they're aware, he has burst his chains:
He has burst his chains, and ah, ha! he's gone,
And the links and the gazers are left alone,
And off to the mountains the panther's flown.

Now what made the panther a prisoner be?
Lo! 'twas the spices and luxury.
And what set that lordly panther free?
'Twas Love!—'twas Love!—'twas no one but he.*

* "What is said of that Taurus which is so called by us, extending beyond Armenia (though this has been called in question), is now made apparent from the panthers, which I know have been taken in the spice-bearing part of Pamphylia; for they, delighting in odours, which they scent at a great distance, quit Armenia, and cross the mountains in search of the tears of the storax, at the time when the wind blows from that quarter, and the trees distil their gums. It is said a panther was once taken in Pamphylia, with a gold chain about its neck, on which was inscribed, in Armenian letters, 'Arsaces the king, to the Nysæan God.' Arsaces was then king of Armenia, who is supposed to have given it its liberty on account of its magnitude, and in honour of Bacchus, who, amongst

the Indians, is called Nysius, from Nysa, one of their towns: this, however, is an appellation which he bears among all the oriental nations. This panther became subject to man, and grew so tame, that it was patted and caressed by every one. But on the approach of spring, a season when panthers become susceptible of love, it felt the general passion, and rushed with fury into the mountains in quest of a mate, with the gold chain about its neck."—*Life of Apollonius of Tyana*, p. 68.

BALLADS OF ROBIN HOOD.

THESE ballads are founded on the popular assumption that the good outlaw Robin Hood, "the gentlest of thieves," as the old historian called him, was of "gentle blood." It is a very good and very probable assumption, considering how the Saxon gentry in his time were robbed of their estates by their Norman tyrants; and it ought never to be more popular than now, when to feel for the sufferings of all classes, and endeavour to advance the whole human race, is a mark of the highest education, that of the Sovereign included. The author adopted the metrical licence of the old ballads while writing on this subject, but it was not his object to confine himself to their manner.

ROBIN HOOD A CHILD.

IT was the pleasant season yet,
When the stones at cottage doors
Dry quickly while the roads are wet,
After the silver showers.

The green leaves they look'd greener still,
And the thrush, renewing his tune,
Shook a loud note from his gladsome bill
Into the bright blue noon.

Robin Hood's mother look'd out, and said,
"It were a shame and a sin,
For fear of getting a wet head,
To keep such a day within,
Nor welcome up from his sick bed
Your uncle Gamelyn."

And Robin leap'd for mirth and glee,
And so they quit the door,
And "Mother, I'm your dog," quoth he,
And scamper'd on before.

Robin was a gentle boy,
And therewithal as bold;
To say he was his mother's joy,
It were a phrase too cold.

His hair upon his thoughtful brow
Came smoothly clipp'd, and sleek,
But ran into a curl somehow
Beside his merrier cheek.

Great love to him his uncle, too,
The noble Gamelyn bare,
And often said, as his mother knew,
That he should be his heir.

Gamelyn's eyes, now getting dim,
Would twinkle at his sight,
And his ruddy wrinkles laugh at him
Between his locks so white:

For Robin already let him see
He should beat his playmates all
At wrestling, and running, and archery,
For he cared not for a fall.

Now and then his gall arose,
And into a rage he flew;
But 'twas only at such as Tom Harden's blows,
Who, when he had given a bloody nose,
Used to mimic the cock when he crows;
Otherwise Rob laugh'd too.

Merriest he was of merry boys,
And would set the old helmets bobbing;*
If his uncle ask'd about the noise,
'Twas "If you please, sir, Robin."

And yet if the old man wish'd no noise,
He'd come and sit at his knee,
And be the gravest of grave-eyed boys,
And not a word spoke he.

* Of his uncle's ancestors, to wit, in the hall.

So whenever he and his mother came
To brave old Shere Wood Hall,
'Twas nothing there but sport and game,
And holiday folks all:
The servants never were to blame,
Though they let the pasty fall.

And now the travellers turn the road,
And now they hear the rooks;
And there it is,—the old abode,
With all its hearty looks.

Robin laugh'd, and the lady too,
And they look'd at one another;
Says Robin, "I'll knock as I'm used to do
At uncle's window, mother."

And so he pick'd up some pebbles and ran,
And jumping higher and higher,
He reach'd the windows with *tan a ran tan*,
And instead of the kind old white hair'd man,
There look'd out a fat friar.

"How now," said the fat friar, angrily,
"What is this knocking so wild?"
But when he saw young Robin's eye,
He said, "Go round, my child.

"Go round to the hall, and I'll tell you all."
"He'll tell us all!" thought Robin;
And his mother and he went quietly,
Though her heart was set a throbbing.

The friar stood in the inner door,
And tenderly said, "I fear
You know not the good squire's no more,
Even Gamelyn Shere.

"Gamelyn of Shere Wood is dead,
He changed but yesternight:"
"Now make us way," the lady said,
To see that doleful sight."

"Good old Gamelyn Shere is dead,
And has made us his holy heirs:"
The lady stay'd not for all he said,
But went weeping up the stairs.

Robin and she went hand in hand,
Weeping all the way,
Until they came where the lord of that land
Dumb in his cold bed lay.

His hand she took, and saw his dead look,
With the lids over each eye-ball;
And Robin and she wept as plenteously
As though he had left them all.

"I will return, Sir Abbot of Vere,
I will return, as is meet,
And see my honour'd brother dear
Laid in his winding sheet.

"And I will stay, for to go were a sin,
For all a woman's tears,
And see the noble Gamelyn
Laid equal with the Veres."

The lady went with a sick heart out
Into the fresh air,
And told her Robin all about
The abbot whom he saw there:

And how his uncle must have been
Disturb'd in his failing sense,
To leave his wealth to these artful men,
At her's and Robin's expense.

Sad was the stately day for all
But the Vere Abbey friars,
When the coffin was stript of its hiding pall,
Amidst the hushing choirs.

Sad was its going down into the dust,
And the thought of the face departed;
The lady shook at them, as shake we must,
And Robin he felt strange-hearted.

That self-same evening, nevertheless,
They return'd to Locksley town,
The lady in a sore distress,
And Robin looking down.

No word he spoke, no note he took
Of bird, or beast, or aught,
Till she ask'd him with a woful look
What made him so full of thought.

"I was thinking, mother," said little Robin,
And with his own voice so true
He spoke right out, "That if I was a king,
Or if I was a man, which is the next thing,
I'd see what those friars do.

"I wouldn't let 'em be counted friars,
If they did as these have done,
But make 'em fight, for rogues and liars;
I'd make 'em fight, to see which was right,
Them, or the mother's son."

His mother stoop'd with a tear of joy,
And she kiss'd him again and again,
And said, "My own little Robin boy,
Thou wilt be a King of Men."

ROBIN HOOD'S FLIGHT.

Robin Hood's mother, these ten years now,
Has been gone from her earthly home;
And Robin has paid, he scarce knew how,
A sum for a noble tomb.

The church-yard lies on a woody hill,
But open to sun and air:
It seems as if the heaven still
Were blessing the good bones there.

Often when Robin turn'd that way,
He look'd through a sweet thin tear;
But he look'd in a different manner, they say,
Towards the Abbey of Vere.

Custom had made him not care for wealth,
Sincere was his mirth at pride;
He had youth, and strength, and health,
And enough for one beside.

But he thought of his gentle mother's cheek,
How it faded and sunk away,
And how she used to grow more weak
And weary every day;

And how, when trying a hymn, her voice
At evening would expire,

How unlike it was the arrogant noise
Of the hard throats in the quire:

And Robin thought too of the poor,
How they toil'd without their share,
And how the alms at the abbey door
But kept them as they were:

And he thought him then of the friars again,
Who rode jingling up and down,
With their trappings and things as fine as the king's,
Though they wore but a shaven crown.

And then of the king bold Robin he thought,
And the homes for his sports undone;
How the poor were turn'd out where his deer were brought,
Yet on body and soul what agonies wrought,
If starving, they killed but one.

And in angry mood, as Robin thus stood,
Digging his bow in the ground,
He was aware in old Shere Wood,
Of a huckster who look'd around.

"And what is Will doing?" said Robin then,
"That he looks so fearful and wan?"
"Oh my dear master that should have been,
I am a weary man."

"A weary man," said Will Nokes, "am I;
For unless I pilfer this wood
To sell to the fletchers, for want I shall die
Here in this forest so good.

"Here in this forest where I have been
So happy and so stout,
And like a palfrey on the green,
Have carried yourself about."

"And why, Will Nokes, not come to me?
Why not to Robin, Will?
For I remember thy love and thy glee,
And the scar that marks thee still;

"And not a soul of my uncle's men
To such a pass should come,
While Robin can find in his pocket or bin
A penny or a crumb.

"Stay thee, Will Nokes, man, stay awhile;
And kindle a fire for me."
And into the wood for half a mile,
He has vanish'd instantly.

Robin Hood, with his cheek on fire,
Has drawn his bow so stern,
And a leaping deer, with one leap higher,
Lies motionless in the fern.

Robin, like a proper knight,
As he should have been,
Carv'd a part of the shoulder right,
And bore off a portion clean.

"Oh, what hast thou done, dear master mine,
What hast thou done for me?"
"Roast it, Will, for excepting wine,
Thou shalt feast thee royally."

And Nokes he took and half roasted it,
Blubbering with blinding tears,
And ere he had eaten a second bit,
A trampling came to their ears.

They heard the tramp of a horse's feet,
And they listen'd and kept still,
For Will was feeble, and knelt by the meat;
And Robin he stood by Will.

"Seize him, seize him!" the Abbot cried
With his fat voice through the trees;
Robin a smooth arrow felt and eyed,
And Will jump'd stout with his knees.

Time had made the fat Abbot, I trow,
A fatter and angrier man;

Yet the voice was the same that twelve years ago
Out of the window, to Robin below,
Answer'd the *tan a ran tan.*

"Seize him! seize him!" and now they appear,
The Abbot and foresters three:
"'Twas I," cried Will, "that slew the deer:"
Says Robin, "Now let not a man come near,
Or he's dead as dead can be."

But on they came, and with gullet cleft
The first one met the shaft,
And he fell with a face of all mirth bereft,
That just before had laugh'd.

The others turn'd to that Abbot vain,
But "Seize him!" still he cried,
And as the second man turn'd again,
The second man shriek'd, and died.

"Seize him, seize him still, I say,"
Cried the Abbot, in furious chafe,
"Or these dogs will grow so bold some day,
E'en monks will not be safe."

A fatal word! for as he sat,
Urging the sword to cut,
An arrow stuck in his paunch so fat,
As in a leathern butt:

As in a leathern butt of wine,
Or piece of beef so round,
Stuck that arrow, strong and fine;
Sharp had it been ground.

I know not what the Abbot, alack!
Thought when that was done;
But there tumbled from the horse's back
A matter of twenty stone.

"Truly," said Robin without fear,
Smiling there as he stood,
"Never was slain so fat a deer
In good old Gamelyn's wood."

"Pardon, pardon, Sir Robin stout,"
Said he that stood apart,
"As soon as I knew thee, I wish'd thee out
Of the forest with all my heart.

"And I pray thee let me follow thee
Any where under the sky,
For thou wilt never stay here with me,
Nor without thee can I."

Robin smiled, and suddenly fell
Into a little thought;
And then into a leafy dell
The three slain men they brought.

Ankle deep in leaves so red,
Which autumn there had cast,
When going to her winter bed
She had undrest her last.

And there in a hollow, side by side,
They buried them under the treen;
The Abbot's belly, for all its pride,
Made not the grave be seen.

Robin Hood, and the forester,
And Nokes the happy Will,
Struck off among the green leaves there
Up a pathless hill;

And Robin caught a sudden sight
Of merry sweet Locksley town,
Reddening in the sunset bright;
And the gentle tears came down.

Robin look'd at the town and land,
And the church-yard where it lay;
And loving Will he kiss'd his hand,
And turn'd his head away.

Then Robin turn'd with a grasp of Will's,
And clapp'd him on the shoulder,
And said, with one of his pleasant smiles,
"Now show us three men bolder."

And so they took their march away,
As firm as if to fiddle,
To journey that night and all next day,
With Robin Hood in the middle.

ROBIN HOOD AN OUTLAW.

Robin Hood is an outlaw bold,
Under the greenwood tree;
Bird, nor stag, nor morning air,
Is more at large than he.

They sent against him twenty men,
Who join'd him laughing-eyed;
They sent against him thirty more,
And they remain'd beside.

All the stoutest of the train
That grew in Gamelyn wood,
Whether they came with these or not,
Are now with Robin Hood.

And not a soul in Locksley town
Would speak him an ill word;
The friars raged; but no man's tongue,
Nor even feature stirred;

Except among a very few,
Who dined in the Abbey halls;
And then with a sigh bold Robin knew
His true friends from his false.

There was Roger the monk, that used to make
All monkery his glee;
And Midge, on whom Robin had never turn'd
His face but tenderly;

With one or two, they say, besides—
Lord! that in this life's dream
Men should abandon one true thing,
That would abide with them.

We cannot bid our strength remain,
Our cheeks continue round;
We cannot say to an aged back,
Stoop not towards the ground:

We cannot bid our dim eyes see
Things as bright as ever,
Nor tell our friends, though friends from youth,
That they'll forsake us never:

But we can say, *I* never will,
False world, be false for thee;
And, oh Sound Truth and Old Regard,
Nothing shall part us three.

HOW ROBIN AND HIS OUTLAWS LIVED IN THE WOODS.

Robin and his merry men
Liv'd just like the birds;
They had almost as many tracks as thoughts,
And whistles and songs as words.

All the morning they were wont
To fly their grey-goose quills
At butts, or trees, or wands and twigs,
Till theirs was the skill of skills.

With swords, too, they played lustily,
And at quarter-staff;
Buffets oft their forfeits were,
Fit to twirl a calf.

Friends who join'd the sport were bound
Those hazards to endure;
But foes were lucky to carry away
What took a year to cure.

The horn was then their dinner-bell;
When, like princes of the wood,
Under the state of summer trees,
Pure venison was their food.

Pure venison and good ale or wine,
Except when luck was chuff;
Or grant 'twas Adam's ale; what then?
Their blood was wine enough.

And story then, and jest, and song,
And Harry's harp went round;
And sometimes they'd get up and dance,
For pleasure of the sound.

Tingle, tangle! said the harp,
As they footed in and out:
Good Lord! was ever seen a dance
At once so light and stout?

A pleasant sight, especially
If Margery was there,
Or little Ciss, or laughing Bess,
That tired out six pair;

Or any other merry lass
From the neighbouring villages,
Who came with milk and eggs, or fruit,
A singing through the trees.

Only they say the men were given
Too often to take wives,
And then, 'twixt forest and a shop,
Lead strange half-honest lives.

But all the country round about
Was fond of Robin Hood,
With whom they got a share of more
Than fagots from the wood.

Nor ever would he suffer harm,
To woman, above all;
No plunder, were she ne'er so great,
No fright to great or small;

No,—not a single kiss unliked,
Nor one look-saddening clip;
Accurst be he, said Robin Hood,
Makes pale a woman's lip.

And then, oh then, Maid Marian came
From her proud brother's hall,
With a world of love and tears,
And smiles behind them all.

They built her bowers in forests three,
To flit from one to t'other,
And Robin and she reign'd as pleasant to all,
As faithful to one another.

Only upon the Normans proud,
And on their unjust store,
He'd lay his fines of equity
For his merry men and the poor.

And special was his joy, no doubt,
(Which made the dish to curse)
To light upon a good fat friar,
And carve him of his purse.

A monk to him was a toad in the hole,
And a priest was a pig in grain,
But a bishop was a baron of beef,
To cut and come again.

Says Robin to the poor who came
To ask of him relief,
You do but get your goods again
That were altered by the thief.

See here now is a plump new coin,
And here's a lawyer's cloak,
And here's the horse the bishop rode,
When suddenly he woke.

Well, ploughman, there's a sheaf of yours
Turn'd to yellow gold;
And, miller, there's your last year's rent,
'Twill wrap thee from the cold.

And you there, Wat of Herefordshire,
Who such a way have come,
Get upon your land-tax, man,
And ride it merrily home.

MAHMOUD.*

TO RICHARD HENRY HORNE.

HORNE, hear a theme that should have had its dues
From thine own passionate and thoughtful Muse.

THERE came a man, making his hasty moan
Before the Sultan Mahmoud on his throne,
And crying out—"My sorrow is my right,
And I *will* see the Sultan, and to-night."
"Sorrow," said Mahmoud, "is a reverend thing:
I recognise its right, as king with king;
Speak on." "A fiend has got into my house,"
Exclaim'd the staring man, "and tortures us:
One of thine officers;—he comes, the abhorr'd,
And takes possession of my house, my board,
My bed:—I have two daughters and a wife,
And the wild villain comes, and makes me mad
with life."

* This is Mahmoud the Gaznevide, whose history has been told by Gibbon. The version of the noble and affecting adventure, here repeated, was suggested by a perusal of it in Gibbon's authority, the *Bibliothèque Orientale* of D'Herbelot, a book to which the author takes this opportunity of expressing his gratitude for many an hour of comfort.

"Is he there now?" said Mahmoud:—"No;—he left
The house when I did, of my wits bereft;
And laugh'd me down the street, because I vow'd
I'd bring the prince himself to lay him in his shroud.
I'm mad with want—I'm mad with misery,
And oh thou Sultan Mahmoud, God cries out for thee!"

The Sultan comforted the man, and said,
"Go home, and I will send thee wine and bread,"
(For he was poor,) "and other comforts. Go;
And, should the wretch return, let Sultan Mahmoud
know."

In two days' time, with haggard eyes and beard,
And shaken voice, the suitor re-appear'd,
And said "He's come."—Mahmoud said not a word,
But rose, and took four slaves, each with a sword,
And went with the vex'd man. They reach the place,
And hear a voice, and see a female face,
That to the window flutter'd in affright.
"Go in," said Mahmoud, "and put out the light;
But tell the females first to leave the room;
And when the drunkard follows them, we come."

The man went in. There was a cry, and hark!
A table falls, the window is struck dark;

Forth rush the breathless women; and behind
With curses comes the fiend in desperate mind.
In vain: the sabres soon cut short the strife,
And chop the shrieking wretch, and drink his bloody life.

"Now *light* the light," the Sultan cried aloud.
'Twas done; he took it in his hand, and bow'd
Over the corpse, and look'd upon the face;
Then turn'd and knelt beside it in the place,
And said a prayer, and from his lips there crept
Some gentle words of pleasure, and he wept.

In reverent silence the spectators wait,
Then bring him at his call both wine and meat;
And when he had refresh'd his noble heart,
He bade his host be blest, and rose up to depart.

The man amaz'd, all mildness now, and tears,
Fell at the Sultan's feet, with many prayers,
And begg'd him to vouchsafe to tell his slave,
The reason first of that command he gave
About the light; then, when he saw the face,
Why he knelt down; and lastly, how it was,
That fare so poor as his detain'd him in the place.

The Sultan said, with much humanity,
"Since first I saw thee come, and heard thy cry,
I could not rid me of a dread, that one
By whom such daring villanies were done,
Must be some lord of mine, perhaps a lawless son.
Whoe'er he was, I knew my task, but fear'd
A father's heart, in case the worst appear'd.
For this I had the light put out. But when
I saw the face, and found a stranger slain,
I knelt and thank'd the sovereign arbiter,
Whose work I had perform'd through pain and fear;
And then I rose, and was refresh'd with food,
The first time since thou cam'st, and marr'dst my solitude."

THE GENTLE ARMOUR;

OR,

THREE KNIGHTS IN STEEL AGAINST ONE IN LINEN.

THE main circumstance of this story—a knight fighting against three, with no other coat of mail than the delicatest garment of his mistress—is taken from one of the Fabliaux that were versified by the late Mr. Way. The lady's appearance in the garment, after the battle, is from the same poem. The turn given to these incidents, the colouring, and the sentiment, are the work of the present writer. The original is a curious specimen of the licence of old times. A married woman, who has a good-humoured craven for her husband, is made love to by three knights; to each of whom, as a trial of his affection, and by way of proving the tenderness of her deserts, she proposes that he shall mix in the fight of a tournament, with no other covering to his body than the one just mentioned. Two of them decline the experiment; the third accepts it, is victorious, and, in order to be on a par with her in delicacy of sentiment, requests that she will make her appearance at her husband's table in the triumphant investment. She does so; the guests are struck with admiration;

> "While the good spouse (not bold, 'twas lately sung)
> Cast down his honest eyes, and held his tongue.
>
> "Speak, guileless damsels! Dames, in love well read!
> Speak, Sirs! in chivalry and honour bred;
> Who best deserves—the lady or the knight?
> He, death who braved, or she, censorious spite?"

Allowance is to be made for the opinions of a different age; and we see, even here, right and wrong principles struggling in the perplexities of custom. But the cultivation of brute force is uppermost; and nothing can reconcile us to the disposition of the woman

who could speculate upon such a tribute to her vanity. It is hoped that the heroine of the following version of the story, without being wanting in self-love, is a little better, and not unsuited to any age.

It has been thought by some persons (and I am ashamed for their sakes, not for my own, to say it) that the leading subject of the poem, a shift, is unfit for relation! In the name of common sense and modesty, on what ground? I confess I should think very ill of any mind, not perverted in its ideas by the worst kind of town life, that could entertain so unworthy a fancy. Most assuredly I wrote for no such persons, but for the innocent, the noble, and the wise. I certainly, especially after such warning, would not read the poem to everybody. I would not have read it, for instance, had I lived in their days, to the club-rooms of Tom Brown and Tom D'Urfey; and I might have had doubts of the audiences of Mrs. Behn and Mrs. Centlivre; but I could have read it with pleasure (*literary* modesty apart) to Addison and Steele, to Atterbury and Berkeley, to their wives and to their daughters. I would have said nothing about the story in the circles of King Charles the Second, male or female; nothing to the Buckinghams and Rochesters, or the Duchesses of Cleveland and Portsmouth; but I would have repeated it without hesitation to Cowley, to Evelyn, to Andrew Marvell, to Milton himself, and to every woman whom they respected;—to Lady Fanshawe, and to Lucy Hutchinson. "No thought infirm," I would be sworn, would have "altered *their* cheek." They would have thought of nothing but the sentiment, and virtues, and nobleness of the story. With those only would cheeks like theirs have glowed.

Of some imaginable living readers, equally refined, it does not become me to speak; but I may add, that "those poor noble, wounded, and sick men," who are suffering for us in the East, would find the achievements, and probably the affections of the story, too much like some of their own to disrespect them: nor do I believe it would be despised even by the divine women who have gone to pour balm into their wounds.

CANTO I.

A LADY'S gift I sing, which meant in blame,
His glorious hauberk to a knight became,
And in the field such dire belabouring bore,
As gentle armour never stood before;
A song of love, fit for the purest ears,
With smiles begun and clos'd, and manhood in the tears.

There liv'd a knight, when knighthood was in flow'r,
Who charm'd alike the tilt-yard and the bow'r;
Young, handsome, blithe, loyal and brave of course,
He stuck as firmly to his friend as horse;
And only show'd, for so complete a youth,
Somewhat too perfect a regard for truth.
He own'd 'twas inconvenient; sometimes felt
A wish 'twere buckled in another's belt;
Doubted its modesty, its use, its right,
Yet after all remain'd the same true knight:
So potent is a custom, early taught;
And to such straits may honest men be brought.

'Tis true, to be believ'd was held a claim
Of gentle blood, and not to be, a shame:—

A liar, notorious as the noon-day sun,
Was bound to fight you, if you call'd him one:—
But yet to be so nice, and stand, profess'd,
All truth, was held a pedantry at best;
Invidious by the men; and by the fair
A thing at once to dote on and beware.
What bliss to meet his flatteries, eye to eye!
But could he not, then, tell one little lie?

At length our hero found, to take his part,
A lovely girl, a quick and virgin heart,
One that believ'd what any friend averr'd,
Much more the whisp'rer of earth's sweetest word.
He lov'd her for her cordial, trusting ways,
Her love of love, and readiness to praise;
And she lov'd him because he told her so,
And truth makes true love doubly sweet to know.

It chanc'd this lady in relation stood
To one as beautiful, but not so good,
Who had been blaz'd, for what indeed she was,
By a young lord, over his hippocras,*
Her lover once, but now so far from tender,
He swore he'd kick her very least defender.

* A spiced wine, much in request during times of chivalry.

The world look'd hard for some one of her kin
To teach this spark to look to his own skin;
But no one came: the lady wept for spite:
At length her cousin ask'd it of the knight.

The knight look'd troubled to the last degree,
Turn'd pale, then red, but said it could not be.
With many sighs he said it, many pray'rs
To be well construed—nay, at last with tears;
And own'd a knight might possibly be better,
Who read the truth less nicely to the letter;
But 'twas his weakness,—'twas his education,—
A dying priest had taught him, his relation,
A kind of saint, who meant him for the church,
And thus had left his breeding in the lurch;
The good old man! he lov'd him, and took blame
(He own'd it) thus to mix his love with shame:
"But oh reflect, my sweet one," cried the youth,
"How you yourself have lov'd me for my truth;
How I love you for loving it, and how
Secure it makes us of our mutual vow.
To feel this hand, to look into those eyes,—
It makes me feel as sure, as of the earth and skies."

"I did love, and I do," the lady cried,
With hand but half allow'd, and cheek aside;

"But then I thought you took me at my word,
And would have scorn'd what I pronounc'd absurd.
My cousin's wrong'd; I'm sure of it; do you
Be sure as well, and show what you can do:
Let but one mind be seen betwixt us two."

In vain our hero, while his aspect glow'd
To hear these lovely words, the difference show'd
'Twixt her kind wishes and an ill desert:
The more he talk'd, the more her pride was hurt,
Till rais'd from glow to glow, and tear to tear,
And pique to injury, she spoke of fear.

"Fear!" cried the knight, blushing because he blush'd,
While sorrow through his gaze in wonder rush'd;
"Had I been present when this lord was heard,
I might perhaps have stopp'd him with a word;
One word (had I suspected it) to show
How ignorant you were of what all know;
And with what passion you could take the part
Of one, unworthy of your loving heart:
But when I know the truth, and know that he
Knew not, nor thought, of either you or me,
And when I'm call'd on, and in open day,
To swear that true is false, and yea is nay,

And know I'm in a lie, and yet go through it,
By all that's blest I own I cannot do it.
Let me but feel me buckled for the right,
And come a world in arms, I'm still a knight:
But give my foe the truth, and me the fraud,
And the pale scholar of the priest is awed."

"Say not the word," the hasty fair one cried:
"I see it all, and wish I might have died.
Go, Sir, oh go! a soldier and afraid!
Was it for this you lov'd a trusting maid?
Your presence kills me, Sir, with shame and grief."—
She said; and sunk in tears and handkerchief.

"Ah, Mabel," said the knight, as with a kiss
He bow'd on her dropp'd head, "you'll mourn for this."
He look'd upon her glossy locks, admir'd
Their gentleness for once, and with a sigh retir'd.

From day to day Sir Hugh has paced his floor,
Look'd out of window, listen'd at the door,
Wrote twice; wrote thrice; learnt of her health; took up
His lute, his book; fill'd, and forgot, a cup;

Tried all but pride, and found no comfort still:
Lov'd him she had, but more had lov'd her will.

It chanc'd a short time after, that the king
Proclaim'd a joust at the return of spring:
The suburb was all hammers, boards, and crowd;
The knights and tailors pleas'd, the ladies proud;
All but our hero and the cousins twain,
Who nurs'd their several sullenness of pain,
And tore in secret much their mental hair;
The ladies that they had no lovers there,
The gentle knight in amorous despair.
The lord who had denounc'd the light one's name,
Seeing no step to vindicate her fame,
And hearing of her cousin's broken vow,
Would laugh, and lift his shoulders and his brow,
And talk of tricks that run in families;
And then he'd lift his glass, and looking wise,
Drink to the health of "Truth betwixt Two Lies."
Two fluster'd fools, though brave, and men of birth,
There were, who join'd in this unseemly mirth;
Fellows who knew, and knew it to their shame,
The worth of one, and chaff of t'other dame.
These clubb'd their jealousies, revenge, and spite,
Till broad the scandal grew, and reach'd the knight.

Our lover heard with mingled rage and joy,
Then rose from out his grief, and call'd his boy,
(A pretty page with letter-bearing face,)
And wrote his mistress to implore her grace;
Her grace and pardon to implore, and some
Small favour for the battle, now to come,—
A glove, a string, aught but a cruel No,
To plume his next day's pounce upon the foe.
The page returns with doubt upon his eyes,
And brings a packet which his lord unties.
"My lady wrote not, saw me not," he said,
"But sends that answer to the note instead."
"This string," exclaims the knight,—"Cut it."
They lift
A lid of pasteboard, and behold——a shift!

CANTO II.

"Now whether shame she means me, or my bliss,"
The knight he cries, "thank her for this, for this!"
And as he spoke, he smother'd up a kiss:—
"To-morrow sees me panoplied indeed,
And blessed be the thought shall clasp me while I bleed!"

Next day the lists are set, the trumpets blown,
And grace requested for a knight unknown,
Who summons, and to mortal fight defies,
Three lordly knights for most unlordly calumnies.
What calumnies they are, he need not tell;
Their names and consciences will serve as well.
The names are then resounded through the place,
And tow'rds the entrance turns the universal face.

With scorn and rage the sturdy gallants hear,
And ask what madman wants a sepulchre;
But when the stranger, with his face unshown,
Rides in, accoutred in a shift alone,
(For on his trunk at least was nought beside)
The doubtful laughter in amazement died.

'Twas clear the champion would be drench'd with wounds,
Yet see how calm he rides the accustom'd rounds!
His mould is manly as the lawn is frail,
A shield is on his arm, his legs and thighs in mail;—
The herald's laws forbid a wounded steed;—
All strain their eyes, and on the shift they read,
Written in black, and answering to the part
The motto spoke of, "It has touch'd her heart."

To admiration deep th' amazement turns,
The dumbness to discourse, which deeply burns;
Till the four parties to their posts fall in,
And soft eyes dazzle, ere the blows begin.

No stint or measure in his gallantry
The stranger knew; but took at once all three:
The trumpets blew their blast of bloody weather,
The swords are out, the warriors rush together,
And with such bulk and tempest comes the knight,
One of the three is overborne outright,
Saddle and man, and snaps his wrist. The wretch
Proclaims his rage and torture in a screech.
The three had thought to save the shift, and bring
The wearer down, for laughter to the king:

But seeing what they see, and both on fire
To reach him first, they turn and charge in ire,
And mix the fight; and such a storm succeeds
Of clatt'ring shields, and helms, and hurtling steeds,
With such a toil pell-mell, now that, now this,
Above, beneath, and rage of hit and miss,
And horses half on ground, or staring high,
And crouching skill, and trampling sovereignty,
That never was beheld a sight so fit
To baffle and turn pale the gazer's wit.
Nathless such skill the marv'llous knight display'd,
The shift some time was spotless as the maid;
Till a great gush proclaiming blood was drawn,
Redder and redder grew the dainty lawn,
And drench'd and dripping, not a thread there stood,
But what was bath'd in his benignant blood.
Sudden he turn'd; and whirling like a wheel,
In both their teeth sent round the whistling steel;
Then with a jovial wrist, he flash'd it down,
And cleft the right man's shoulder to the bone;
Who fell, and like the first was borne aside:
"Is it a devil, or a saint?" they cried:
A tenderer murmur midst the ladies ran:
With tears they bless'd "the angel of a man."

The gallant lord was now the only foe,
And fresh he seem'd: the knight could not be so;
In that last blow his strength must have been
summ'd;
His arm appears unhing'd, his brain benumb'd;
And as the sword seems carving him to death,
At ev'ry gash the crowd draw in their breath.
Sudden the blades are snapp'd; the clubs of
steel
Are call'd; the stranger is observ'd to reel;
Then grasps with both his hands the saddle-bow,
And bends for breath; the people cry "No! No!"
And all the court unconsciously arise:
The ladies on the king turn weeping eyes,
And manly pray'rs are mix'd with sobs and cries.
The monarch was about to part the fight,
When, his club brought, sore passion seized the
knight,
Who grasp'd it, rais'd it like an iron frown,
And rising in his stirrups, sent it down:
It met the other's, taking heavier pains,
And dash'd it, club and helmet, in his brains.
A stifled shriek is heard, the victim falls,
The victor too: "Help! Help!" the monarch
calls;
A shout, half terror, shakes the suburb walls.

His helm unloos'd, they recognise the face
Of the best knight that ever bore disgrace,
Now seeming dead, and gone to his long rest
In comfort cold of that hard-hearted vest.
The loveliest ladies kiss him as he lay,
Then watch the leech, who cuts his vest away,
And clears his wounds. The weeping dames prepare
Linen and balms, and part his forlorn hair,
And let upon his face the blessed air.

Meanwhile the tidings to his mistress come,
Who clasps her hands and for a while is dumb;
Then owns the secret why the shift was sent,
But said he far exceeded what she meant.
Pale and despairing to the spot she flies,
Where in his death-like rest her lover lies,
And prays to be let in:—they let her in:
She sees his hands laid straight, and his pale chin,
Nor dares advance to look upon his face,
Till round her come the ladies in the place,
Who comfort her, and say she must complete
The cure, and set her in the nurse's seat.

All day she watch'd, all night, and all next day,
And scarcely turn'd her face, except to pray,

Till the third morn; when, breathing with a moan,
And feeling the soft hand that clasp'd his own,
He woke, and saw the face that had not ceas'd
To haunt his thoughts, in forest or at feast,
Visibly present, sweet with begging fears,
And eyes that lov'd him through remorseful tears.
Ah! love is a soft thing; and strongest eyes
Might answer as his did, with wells of balmy rise.

What need I say? a loitering cure is his,
But full of sweets, and precious memories,
And whispers, laden from the land of bliss.
Sir Hugo with the lark has left his bed;
'Tis June; 'tis lover's month; in short, they wed.
But how? like other people, you suppose,
In silks and state, as all good story goes.
The bridegroom did, and never look'd so well,
Not e'en when in the shift he fought pell-mell:
But the fair bride, instead of things that bless
Wedding-day eyes, display'd a marvellous dress,—
Marvellous, and homely, and in open sight;
The people were so mov'd, they wept outright.

For lo! with hair let loose about her ears,
And taper in her hand the fair appears,

And naked feet, a rosy saint at shrift,
And round her bosom hangs the ruddy shift:
Tatter'd it hangs, all cut and carv'd to rags;
Not fairer droop, when the great organ drags
Its thunders forth, a church's hundred flags.
With glimmering tears she hastens to his feet,
And kneels to kiss them in the public street,
Then takes his hand, and ere she will arise,
Entreats for pardon at his gracious eyes;
And hopes he will not scorn her love for life,
As his most humble and most honour'd wife.

Awhile her lord, with manly deference, stood
Wrapt in the sweetness of that angel mood;
Then stoop'd, and on her brow his soul impress'd,
And at the altar thus the bride was dress'd.

L'ENVOY.

To HER, who loves all peaceful glory,
Therefore laurell'd song and story;
Who, as blooming maiden should,
Married blest, with young and good;
And whose zeal for healthy duties
Set on horseback half our beauties;
Hie thee, little book,* and say—
(Blushing for leave unbegg'd alway;
And yet how beg it for one flower
Cast in the path of Sovereign Power?)
Say that thy verse, though small it be,
Yet mov'd by ancient minstrelsy
To sing of youth escap'd from age,
Scenes pleasant, and a Palfrey sage,
And meditated, morn by morn,
Among the trees where she was born,
Dares come, on grateful memory's part,
Not to Crown'd Head, but to Crown'd Heart.

* *The Palfrey* was originally published in a book by itself.

THE PALFREY.

THE following story is a variation of one of the most amusing of the old French narrative poems that preceded the time of Chaucer, with additions of the writer's invention. The original, which he did not see till it was completed, is to be found in the collection of Messrs. Barbazan and Méon (*Fabliaux et Contes des Poètes François des* 11, 12, 13, 14, *et* 15^e *Siècles*, &c. Edition 1808). His own originals were the prose abridgment of M. Le Grand (*Fabliaux*, &c., third edition, volume the fourth), and its imitation in verse by Messrs. Way and Ellis, inserted in the latter's notes to the select translations from Le Grand by the former of those gentlemen.

The scene of the old story,—the only known production of a poet named Huon le Roi (possibly one of the "Kings of the Minstrels," often spoken of at that period),—is laid in the province of Champagne; but as almost all the narrative poems under the title of *Lays* (of which this is one) are with good reason supposed to have had their source in the Greater or Lesser Britain—that is to say, either among the Welsh of this island, or their cousins of French Brittany, and as the only other local allusions in the poem itself are to places in England, the author has availed himself of the common property in these effusions claimed for the Anglo-Norman Muse,

"Begirt with British and Armorick knights,"

to indulge in a licence universal with the old minstrels, and lay the scene of his version where and when he pleased; to wit, during the reign of Edward the First, and in Kensington, Hendon, and their neighbourhoods,—old names, however new they sound. There is reason to believe, that the woody portions of Kensington, still existing as the Gardens, and in the neighbourhood of Holland House, are part of the ancient forest of Middlesex, which extended from this quarter to the skirts of Hertfordshire: and it is out of regard for these remnants of the old woods, and associations with them still more grateful, that he has placed the scene of his heroine's abode on the site of the existing palace, and the closing scene of the poem in the hall of the De Veres, Earls of Oxford, who are supposed to have had a mansion at that period in the grounds of the present Holland House, near the part called the Moats.

PART FIRST.

The palfrey goes, the palfrey goes,
Merrily well the palfrey goes;
He carrieth laughters, he carrieth woes,
Yet merrily ever the palfrey goes.

'Tis June, and a bright sun burneth all.
Sir William hath gallop'd from Hendon Hall
To Kensington, where in a thick old wood
(Now its fair Gardens) a mansion stood,
Half like fortress, and half like farm,
A house which had ceas'd to be threaten'd with harm.
The gates frown'd still, for the dignity's sake,
With porter, portcullis, and bit of a lake;
But ivy caress'd their warm old ease,
And the young rooks chuckled across the trees,
And burning below went the golden bees.
The spot was the same, where on a May morn
The Rose that toppeth the world was born.

Sir William hath gallop'd, and well was bent
His palfrey to second a swift intent;
And yet, having come, he delayeth his knock,
E'en though a sweet maiden counteth the clock

Till she meet his eye from behind the chair,
Where sitteth Sir Guy with his old white hair.
But the youth is not rich; and day by day
Sir Guy groweth cold, and hath less to say,
And daunteth his wit with *haws* and *hums*,
Coughing with grandeur, and twirling his thumbs,
Till visiting turneth to shame and gall,
And Sir William must speak what endangereth all.

Now for any deed else, in love or in war,
Knight bolder was none than the knight De la Barre
(So styled by the king, from a traitor tall,
Whom he pitch'd over barriers, armour and all);
Short distance made he betwixt point and hilt;
He was not a man that at tourney and tilt
Sat bowing to every fair friend he could spy,
Or bearing his fame with a fine cold eye:
A hundred sweet eyes might be watching his own;
He thought but of two, and of steeds to be thrown;
And the trumpets no sooner blew mights to mights,
Than crash went his onset and down went knights.

And thus in his love for sweet Anne de Paul,
Though forc'd to some stealths, 'twas honest withal:
He wooed, though the old man ever was by,
With talk such as fixeth a maiden's eye,

With lore and with legends, earnest of heart,
And an art that applied them, sprung out of no art,
Till stealth for his sake seem'd truth's own right,
And at an old casement long clos'd, one night,
Through boughs never dry, in a pathless nook,
Love's breathless delight in his vows she took.
Ah! never thenceforth, by sunniest brook,
Did the glittering cherry-trees beat the look
Of the poor-growing stems in the pathless nook.

But, alas! to plead love unto loving eyes,
And to beg for its leave of the worldly wise,
All humility sweet on the one side lies,
And all on the other that mortifies.

Sir William hath swallow'd a sigh at last,
Big as his heart, and the words have pass'd:
"I love your daughter, Sir Guy," quoth he,
"And though I'm not rich, yet my race may be;
A race with a scutcheon as old as the best,
Though its wealth lies at Acre in holy rest.
Mine uncle, your friend, so blithe and old,
Hath nobody nigher to leave his gold:
The king hath been pleas'd to promise my sword
The picking of some great Frenchman's hoard;

And sire, meantime, should not blush for wife;
Soft as her hand should fare her life;
My rents, though small, can support her state,
And I'd fight for the rest till I made them great.
Vouchsafe to endure that I seek her love:
I know she resembles the blest above;
Her face would paint sweeter a monarch's bower,
Though glory and grace were in every flower:
But angels on monarchs themselves look down,
And love is to love both coffer and crown."

Sir William ended, he scarce knew why,
(But 'twas pity of self, to move pity thereby,)
With a sad, perchance with an abject sigh,
And stoop'd and kiss'd the hand of Sir Guy:
Steady and sharp was the old man's eye.

"Sir William, no doubt, is a bold young knight,"
Quoth he, "and my daughter a beauty bright;
And a beauty bright and a bold young man
Have suited, I wot, since the world began.
But the man that is bold and hath money beside,
Cometh best arm'd for a beauteous bride.
The court will be riding this way next week,
To honour the earl's fat chimney reek;

And softly will many a bold bright eye
Fall on the face no face comes nigh.
You speak of mirth, and you speak of age,
Not in a way very civil or sage.
Your kinsman, the friend whom you call so old,
But ten years less than myself hath told:
And I count not this body so ancient still,
As to warrant green years to talk of my will.
Let him come if he please (I shall greet the friend)
And show me which way his post-obits tend,
And then we can parley of courtings best;
Till when, I advise you to court his chest."

Sir William he boweth as low as before,
And after him closeth the soft room door,
And he moaneth a moan, and half staggereth he;
He doubteth which way the stairs may be.
But the lower his bow, and the deeper his moan,
The redder the spot in his cheek hath grown,
And he loatheth the kiss to the hard old hand.

"May the devil," thought he, "for his best new brand,
Pluck it, and strike to his soul red-hot!
Why scorn me, and mock me? and why, like a sot,
Must I stoop to him, low as his own court-plot?

Will any one tell us,—will Nature declare,—
How father so foul can have daughter so fair?
But her mother of angels dreamt in her sorrow,
And hence came this face—this dimpled May-morrow."

And as he thought thus, from a door there stole
A hand in a tremble, a balm to his soul;
And soft though it trembled, it close wrung his,
And with it a letter;—and gone it is.

Sir William hath dash'd in the forest awhile,
His being seems all a hasty smile:
And there, by green light and the cooing of doves,
He readeth the letter of her he loves,
And kisseth and readeth again and again;
His bridle is dropp'd on his palfrey's mane,
Who turneth an ear, and then, wise beast,
Croppeth the herbage,—a prudent feast;
For Sir William no sooner hath read nine times,
Than he deemeth delay the worst of crimes:
He snatcheth the bridle, and shakes it hard,
And is off for his life on the loud green sward;
He foameth up steep, and he hisseth in stream,
And saluteth his uncle like one in a dream.

"Sir William, Sir William, what chase is this?
Have you slain a fat buck, or stolen a kiss;

And is all the world, on account of his wife,
After poor dripping Sir William's life!"

"Most honour'd of kinsmen," Sir William cried,
"Nought have I stolen, but hope of a bride;
Her father, no Christian like her, but a Jew,
Would make me disburse; which grieveth her too.
You know who she is, but have yet to know,
What a rose in the shade of that rock could grow;
What fulness of beauty on footstalk light;
What a soul for sweet uncle to love at sight.
Ah! Sir, she loveth your own blithe fame,
And dareth, she saith, in your sister's name
Entreat me the loan of some fields of corn,
Which her dowry shall buy on the bridal morn.
I blush, dear uncle; I drop mine eye-lids;
Yet who should blush when a lady bids?
'Tis lending me bliss; 'tis lending me life;
And she'll kiss you withal, saith the rosy wife."

"Ah, ha!" quoth Sir Grey, with his twinkling eyes:
"The lass, I see, is both merry and wise;
I call her to mem'ry, an earnest child,
Now looking straight at you, now laughing wild:
'Tis now—let me see—five long years ago,
And that's a good time for such buds to blow.

Well,—dry your outside, and moisten your in;
This wine is a bud of my oldest bin;
And we'll talk of the dowry, and talk of the day,
And see if her bill be good, boy, eh?"

Sir Grey didn't say, You're my sister's son,
I have left you my gold, and your work is done.—
He hated to speak of his gold, like death;
And he lov'd a good bill as he lov'd his breath;
And yet, for all that, Sir Grey, I trow,
Was a very good man, as corn-dealers go.

So the lover hath seiz'd the new old hand,
And kiss'd it, as though it had given the land,
And invok'd on its bounty such bliss from above,
Thought he, "Of a truth, I *am* mean in love."
But free was his fervor from any such vice;
For when obligation's more fitting than nice,
We double the glow of our thanks and respect,
To hide from th' obliger his own defect.

"That palfrey of thine's a good palfrey, Will;
He holdeth his head up, and danceth still,
And trippeth as light by the ostler's side,
As though just saddled to bear your bride;
And yet, by Saint Richard, as drench'd is he
And as froth'd as though just out of the sea:

Methinks I hear him just landed free,
Shaking him and his saddle right thunderously.
And he starteth at nothing?"
"No more than the wall."
"And is sure of his footing?"
"As monarch in hall.
He's a thunder in fight, and a thief on the road,
So swiftly he speedeth whatever his load!
Yet round the wolf's den half a day will he hover,
And carrying a lady, takes heed like a lover."
"And therefore Sir William will part with him never?"
"Nay, uncle, he will;—for ever and ever."
"And what such a jewel may purchase, I pray?"
"Thanks, thanks, dearest uncle, and not saying Nay.
Now prythee deny me not grace so small:
The palfrey in truth is comely withal,
And you still shall lend him to bear my bride;
But whom, save our help, should he carry beside?"
"I'm vex'd."
"For pity."
"I'm griev'd."
"Now pray."
"'Tis cheap," thought the uncle, "this not saying Nay."

PART SECOND.

The palfrey goes, the palfrey goes,
Merrily ever the palfrey goes;
Nought he carrieth now but woes,
And yet full well the palfrey goes.

Sir Grey and Sir Guy, like proper old boys,
Have met, with a world of coughing and noise;
And after subsiding, judiciously dine,
Serious the venison, and chirping the wine.
They talk of the court, now gathering all
To the sunny plump smoke of Earl-Mount Hall:
And pity their elders laid up on the shelves,
And abuse every soul upon earth but themselves:
Only Sir Grey doth it rather to please,
And Sir Guy out of honest old spite and disease:
For Sir Guy hath a face so round and so red,
The whole of his blood seemeth hanging his head,
While Sir Grey's red face is waggish and thin,
And he peereth with upraised nose and chin.

Nathless Sir Grey excepteth from blame
His nephew Sir Will, and his youthful fame;
And each soundeth t'other, to learn what hold
The youth and the lady may have of his gold.

Alas! of his gold will neither speak,
Tho' the wine it grew strong, and the tongue grew weak;
And when the sweet maiden herself appears,
With a breath in her bosom, and blush to her ears,
And the large thankful eyes of the look of a bride,
Sir Grey recollecteth no creature beside:
He watcheth her in, he watcheth her out;
He measureth her ankle, but not with his gout;
He chucketh, like chanticleer over a corn,
And thinks it but forty years since he was born.

"Why, how now, Sir Grey? methinks you grow young:
How soon are your own wedding bells to be rung?
You stare on my daughter, like one elf-struck."

"Alas! and I am,—the sadder my luck:—
Albeit, Sir Guy, your own shoulders count
Years not many more than mine own amount,
And I trust you don't feign to be too old to wed?"

"Hoh! hoh!" quoth Sir Guy; "that was cunningly said."
(Yet he felt flatter'd too, did the white old head.)

"What *are* years?" continued Sir Grey, looking bold;
"There are men never young, and men never old.

Old and young lips may carol in tune;
Green laugheth the oak 'gainst the brown mid June.
Lo! dapper Sir Kit, with his large young wife;
His big-leggèd babes are the pride of his life."

Sir Guy shook his head.
"And the stout old lord,
Whose wife sitteth front him so meek at his board."

"Ay, ay," quoth Sir Guy, "and stuffeth so fast,
His eyesight not reaching the lady's repast."

"Well, well," quoth Sir Grey—
"Ill, ill," quoth Sir Guy;
"The children of old men full well I descry;
They look, by Saint Christendom! old as themselves;
Are dwarf'd, are half wither'd; they grin like elves."

"They may," quoth Sir Grey, "when both parents are old,
Or when the old parent is wrinkle-soul'd;
But not when he's hearty and merry as we.
You grieve me, Sir Guy. Oh! 'tis doleful to see
How vainly a friend may come here for a bride,
Though he loveth the daughter, and father beside."

"Your pardon, your pardon, dear friend," crieth Guy:
"What, you? What, Sir Grey with his ever-bright eye?
We talk'd of the old, but who talk'd of Sir Grey?
But speak ye right soberly? mean what ye say?"

"Ay, truly I do," with a sigh crieth Grey;
"As truly as souls that for Paradise pray.
And hark ye, dear friend; you'll miss your sweet Anne,
If she weddeth, I wot, some giddy young man.
He'll bear her away, and be lov'd alone,
And wish, and yet grudge, your very tomb-stone.
Now give her to me, I'll give her my gold,
And I'll give to yourself my wood and my wold,
And come and live here, and we'll house together,
And laugh o'er our cups at the winter weather."

"A bargain! a bargain!" cried old Sir Guy,
With a stone at his heart, and the land in his eye;
"Your hand to the bargain, my dear old friend:
My 'old' did I call thee? My world without end.
I'll bustle her straight; and to keep all close,
You shall carry her with you, ere creature knows,
Save Rob, and Sir Rafe, and a few beside,
For guests and for guards to the travelling bride;
And so, ere the chattering court come down,
Wed her at home in your own snug town."

Now a murrain, I say, on those foul old men!
I never, myself, shall see fifty again,
And can pity a proper young-blooded old fellow,
Whose heart is green, though his cheek be yellow;
For Nature, albeit she never doth wrong,
Yet seemeth in such to keep youth too long:
And 'tis grievous when such an one seeth his bliss
In a face which can see but the wrinkles in his.
Ah! pray let him think there are dames not young,
For whom the bells yet might be handsomely rung.
'Tis true, grey-beards *have* been, like Jove's of old,
That have met a young lip, nor been thought too bold.
In Norfolk a wondrous old lord hath been seen,
Who at eighty was not more than forty, I ween;
And I myself know a hale elderly man,
In face and in frolic a very god Pan.
But marvels like these are full rare, I wis:
And when elders in general young ladies would kiss,
I exhort the dear souls to fight and to flee,
Unless they should chance to run against me.

Alas! I delay as long as I can,
For who may find words for thy grief, sweet Anne?
'Tis hard when young heart, singing songs of to-
morrow,
Is suddenly met by the old hag, Sorrow.

She fainteth, she prayeth, she feeleth sore ill;
She wringeth her hands; she cannot stand still;
She tasteth the madness of wonder and will;—
Nor, sweet though she was, had she yielded at last,
Had Sir Guy not his loathly old plethora cast
In the scale against love and its life-long gains,
And threaten'd her fears for his bursting veins.
"I'll wed him," she wrote to Sir William;—"yes;
But nothing on earth—" and here her distress
Broke off, and she wept, and the tears fell hot
On the paper, and made a great starry blot.
Alas! tears and letter burn under the eye
Of watchful, unmerciful, old Sir Guy;
And so on a night, when all things round,
Save the trees and the moon, were sleeping sound,
From his casement in shadow he sees his child,
Bent in her weeping, yet alway mild,
The fairest thing in the moon's fair ray,
Borne like some bundle of theft away;
Borne by a horde of old thieves away,
The guests and the guards of false Sir Grey.

She pray'd, but she spake out aloud no word;
She wept, but no breath of self-pity was heard:
Her woe was a sight for no dotards to see;
And yet not bereft of all balm was she;

One balm there was left her, one strange but rare,
Nay, one in the shape of a very despair;
To wit, the palfrey that wont to bear
The knight De la Barre on his daily way
To her, and love, and false Sir Grey.
Him it had borne, her now it bore;
And weeping sweet, though more and more,
And praying for its master's bliss
(Oh! no true love will scoff at this),
She stoop'd, and gave its neck a kiss.

PART THIRD.

The palfrey goes, the palfrey goes,
Merrily still the palfrey goes;
He goes a path he never chose,
Yet still full well the palfrey goes.

Could the sweet moon laugh, its light
Had surely been convuls'd that night,
To see fifteen old horsemen wag
Their beards, to one poor maiden's nag;
Fifteen old beards in chat and cough,
Rumbling to keep the robbers off,
And ever and aye, when lanes grew close,
Following each the other's nose,
And with the silver beam she cast
Tipp'd, like every tree they pass'd.

The owls they seem'd to hoot their folly
With a staring melancholy.

After jealous sort, I wis,
Cull'd Sir Grey these guests of his,
Not a soul so young as he
Gracing all his chivalry:
Six there were, of toothless fame,
With each his man, of jaws as tame;
Then his own, the palsiest there;
And last, Sir Guy's, with whitest hair:
And each had snugg'd him for the night
In old flapp'd hat, and cap as white,
In double cloak, and three-fold hose,
Besides good drink to warm his toes,
And so they jog it, beard and nose,
And in the midst the palfrey goes;
Oh! ever well the palfrey goes;
He knows within him what he knows,
And so, full well the palfrey goes.

But in his hamlet hous'd apart,
How far'd, meantime, Sir William's heart?
Oh, when the sun first went to bed,
Not richer look'd the sun's own head,
Nor cast a more all-gladdening eye:
He seem'd to say, "My heav'n is nigh."

For he had heard of rare delights
Between those two old feasting knights,
And of a pillion, new and fair,
Ordain'd to go some road as rare;
With whom? For what sweet rider's art?
Whose, but the dancer's at his heart,
The light, the bright, yet balmy she,
And who shall fetch her home but he?
Who else be summon'd speedily
By the kind uncle full of glee
To fetch away that ecstasy?
So, ever since that news, his ear,
Listening with a lofty fear,
Lest it catch one sound too late,
Stood open, like a palace gate
That waits the bride of some great king,
Heard with her trumpets travelling.
At length a letter. Whose? Sir Guy's,
The father's own. With reverent eyes,
With heart, impatient to give thanks,
And tears that top their glimmering banks,
He opens, reads, turns pale as death;
His noble bosom gasps for breath:
His Anne has left his love for gold,
But in her kindness manifold
Extorted from his uncle's hoard
Enough to leave him bed and board.

Ah! words like those were never Anne's;
Too plainly they the coarse old man's;
But still the letter; still the fact;
With pangs on pangs his heart is rack'd.
Love is an angel, has no pride;
She'll mourn his love when he has died:
Yet love is truth; so hates deceit;
He'll pass and scorn her in the street.
Now will he watch her house at night
For glimpse of her by some brief light,
Such as perhaps his own pale face
May show: and then he'll quit the place.
Now he will fly her, hate, detest,
Mock; make a by-word and a jest:
Then he hates hate; and who so low
As strike a woman's fame! No, no;
False love might spite the faithless Anne,
But true was aye the gentleman.

Thus paceth he, 'twixt calm and mad,
Till the mid-watch, his chamber sad;
And then lies down in his day-dress,
And sleeps for very weariness,
Catching and starting in his moan,
And waking with a life-long groan.
Sometimes he dreams his sorrow makes
Such weeping wail, that, as he wakes,

He lifts his pitying hand to try
His cheek, and wonders it is dry.
Sometimes his virgin bride and he
Are hous'd for the first time, and free
To dwell within each other's eyes;
And then he wakes with woful cries.
Sometimes he hears her call for aid;
Sometimes beholds her bright arrayed,
But pale, and with her eyes on earth;
And once he saw her pass in mirth,
And look at him, nor eye let fall,
And that was wofull'st dream of all.
At length he hears, or thinks he hears,—
(Or dreams he still with waking ears?)
A tinkle of the house's bell!
What news can midnight have to tell?
He listens. No. No sound again.
The breeze hath stirr'd the window-pane;
Perchance it was the tinkling glass;
Perchance 'twas his own brain, alas!
His own weak brain, which hears the blood
Pulse at his ears,—a tingling flood,
Strange mantler in as strange a cup.
Yet hark again!—he starts, leans up;
It seems to fear to wake a mouse,
That sound;—then peals, and wakes the house.

But first, to end what I began,
The journey of sweet houseless Anne.

PART FOURTH.

The palfrey goes, the palfrey goes,
Merry and well the palfrey goes;
You cannot guess till time disclose,
How perfectly well the palfrey goes.

Ah! dream Sir William what he might,
Little he dreamt the truth that night.
Could but some friend have told him all,
How had he spurr'd from Hendon Hall,
And dash'd among the doting set,
Who bore away that soft cheek wet!
How had the hills by which they go,
Re-echo'd to his dire "Hallo!"
Startling the waking farmers' ears
With thoughts of thieves and murderers,
And scattering wide those owlish men,
While close he clasp'd his dove again.
But where I left them, safe go they,
Their drowsy noses droop'd alway
To meet the beard's attractive nest,
Push'd upwards from the muffled breast.
Drowsy they nod, and safe they go;
Sir Grey's good steeds the country know,

And lead the rest full soft and well,
Till snore on snore begins to swell,
Warm as owl-plumage, toned as bell;
True snores, composed of spices fine,
Supper, fresh air, and old mull'd wine.
At first they wake with start and fright,
And sniff and stare with all their might,
And sit, one moment, bolt upright:
But soon reverts each nodding crown:
It droops, it yields, it settles down;
Till in one snore, sincere and deep,
The whole grave train are fast asleep.
Sir Grey, the youngest, yields the last:
Besides, he held two bridles fast,
The lady's palfrey having shown
Much wish to turn up lanes unknown.
Even sweet Anne can war not long
With sleep, the gentle and the strong;
And as the fingers of Sir Grey
By fine degrees give dulcet way,
And leave the happy beast his will,
The only creatures waking still
And free to go where fancy leads,
Are the twice eight bit-mumbling steeds.
Some few accordingly turn round,
Their happy memories homeward bound,

And soon awake their jolted lords,
Who bless themselves from bandit hordes,
And thinking they have only lagg'd,
Are willingly half jellybagg'd.
The rest,—the palfrey meek as any,—
Jog still onward with the many;
Passing now by Kilburn rill,
And now by Hampstead's leaf-stirr'd hill,
Which lulls them still as they descend
The sylvan trough of sweet North-end,
And till they reach thy plot serene
And bowery granges, Golders-green.

Now Golders-Green had then a road
(The same as that just re-bestow'd)
Which cross'd the main road, and went straight
To Finchley, and Sir Grey's own gate;
And thither (every sleeper still
Depending on his horse's will),
Thither, like sheep, turns every head
That follows where the sagest led,—
All but the palfrey's. He, good beast,
From his new master's clutch releas'd,
And longing much his old to see,
His stalls, and all his bounty free

(For poor Sir William's household ways
Were nobler than the rich Sir Grey's),
Goes neither to the right nor left,
But straight as honesty from theft,
Straight as the dainty to the tooth,
Straight as his lady's love and truth,
Straight for the point, the best of all,
Sir William's arms and Hendon Hall.

Not far from where we left them all,
Those steeds and sires, was Hendon Hall,
Some twice four hundred yards or so;
And steeds to stables quickly go.
The lady wakes with the first start;
She cries aloud; she cowers at heart;
And looks around her in affright
On the wide, lonely, homeless night;
Then checks, as sharply as she may
(Not yet aware how blest his way),
Her eager friend; and nighly faints,
And calls on fifty gentle saints,
And, if she could, would close her eyes,
For fear of thieves and sorceries,
Of men all beard and blood, and calls
Over lone fields, and lighted palls,

And elves that ever, as you go,
Skip at your side with mop and mow,
With gibbering becks and moony stares,
Forcing your eyes to look on theirs.

And see! the moon forsakes the road;
She lifts her light to whence it flow'd:
Has she a good or ill bestow'd,
That thus her light forsakes the road?
The owls they hoot with gloomier cry;
They seem to see a murder nigh:
And how the palfrey snorts and pulls!
Now Mary help poor wandering fools!
The palfrey pulls, and he must go;
The lady's hand may not say No.
And go he does; the palfrey goes;
He carrieth now no longer woes;
For she, e'en she, now thinks she knows
Sweet Anne begins to think she knows
Those gathering huts, those poplar rows,
That water, falling as it flows,
This bridge o'er which the palfrey goes,
This gate, at which he stops, and shows
His love to it with greeting nose.
Ah! surely recollects she well
All she has heard her lover tell

Of this same gate, and that same bell:
And she it was, you guess full well,
That pull'd, and pull'd again, that bell;
And down her love has come pell-mell
With page, and squire, and all who ran,
And was the first to find his Anne,—
Was a most mad and blissful man,
Clasping his fainting, faithful Anne.

PART FIFTH.

The palfrey goes, the palfrey goes;
His work is done, you may suppose.
No:—double burden now he knows,
Yet well for ever the palfrey goes.

THE bells in many a giddy ring
Run down the wind to greet the King,
Who comes to feast, for service done,
With Earl De Vere at Kensington,
And brings with him his constant grace
Queen Eleanor, that angel's face.

In many-footed order free
First ride his guards, all staid to see;
In midst of whom the trumpets blow,
Straight as power and glory go:

And then his lords and knights, each one
A manly splendour in the sun;
And then his lofty self appears,
Calmer for the shouts he hears,
With his Queen the courteous-eyed,
Like strength and sweetness side by side;
And thus, his banner steering all,
Rides the King to Earl-Mount Hall.

Meantime, ere yet the sovereign pair
Were threading London's closer air,
An humbler twain, heart-link'd as they,
Were hearing larks and scenting hay,
And coming, too, to Earl-Mount Hall
Through many a green lane's briery wall,
Many a brier and many a rose,
And merrily ever the palfrey goes,
Merrily though he carrieth two,
And one hath sometimes great ado
To sit while o'er the ruts he goes,
Nor clasp the other doubly close,
Who cannot chuse but turn, and then—
Why, if none see, he clasps again.
"Ah," thinks the lady, as she looks
Through tears and smiles with half-rebukes,

"Ah, *must* my father break his heart?
For surely now we never part."

Behind, some furlong off, and 'twixt
Those winding oaks with poplars mix'd,
Come two upon a second steed,
Male, too, and female; not indeed
The female young and fair as t' other:
She is the page's honour'd mother.
Much talk they on the road;—at least
Much talks the mother; while the beast
Pulls at the hedges as he goes,
Pricking oft his tossing nose;
And the page, though listening, sees
Newts in the brooks and nests in trees.
Lastly a hound, tongue-lolling, courses
To and fro 'twixt both the horses,
Giving now some weasel chase,
And loving now his master's face,
And so, with many a turn and run,
Goes twenty furlongs to their one.

This riding double was no crime
In the first great Edward's time;
No brave man thought himself disgrac'd
By two fair arms about his waist;

Nor did the lady blush vermilion,
Dancing on the lover's pillion.
Why? Because all modes and actions
Bow'd not then to Vulgar Fractions;
Nor were tested all resources
By the power to purchase horses.

Many a steed yet won had he,
Our lover, in his chivalry;
For, in sooth, full half his rents
Were ransoms gain'd in tournaments;
But all, save these, were gone at present.—
Ah! the green lane still was pleasant.

Hope was theirs. For one sweet hour
Did they, last night, in bliss devour
Each other's questions, answers, eyes,
Nor ever for divine surprise
Could take a proper breath, much less
The supper brought in hastiness
By the glad little gaping page;
While rose meantime his mother sage
To wait upon the lady sweet,
And snore discreetly on the seat
In the oriel of the room,
Whence gleam'd her night-cap through the gloom.

Then parted they to lie awake
For transport, spite of all heart-ache:
For heaven's in any roof that covers,
Any one same night, two lovers;
They may be divided still;
They may want, in all but will;
But they know that each is there,
Each just parted, each in prayer;
Each more close, because apart,
And every thought clasp'd heart to heart.

Alas! in vain their hearts agree;
Good must seem good, as well as be;
And lest a spot should stain his flower
For blushing in a brideless bower,
Sir William with the lark must rise,
And bear,—but whither bear?—his prize:
Not to Sir Grey's, for that were scorn;
Not to Sir Guy's, to live forlorn;
Not to some abbey's jealous care,
For Heaven would try to wed her there;
But to a dame that serv'd the Queen,
His aunt, and no mean dame, I ween,—
A dame of rank, a dame of honour,
A dame (may earth lie green upon her!)

That felt for nature, love, and truth,
And hated old age pawing youth:
One that at no time held wrong right,
Yet somehow took a dear delight,
By secret measures, sweet and strong,
In giving right a zest of wrong.
To her Sir William brings his Anne
Three hours before the feast began,
But first has sent his page to spy
How day has dawn'd with old Sir Guy.
The page scarce vanish'd, re-appears,
His eyes wide open as their ears,
And tells how all the beards are there:
All;—every mump of quivering hair,
Come back with groan, and back with stare,
To set Sir Guy upon the rack,
And find the lady *not* come back.

"Now God bless all their groans and stares,
And eke their most irreverend hairs!"
Cries the good dame; the Lady Maud,
Laughing with all her shoulders broad:—
"My budget bursteth sure with this!
This were a crowning galliardise
For king himself to tell in hall,
Against his lords' wit groweth small."

And rustling in her vestments broad,
Forth sails the laughing Lady Maud
To tell the King and tell the Queen;
But first she kiss'd sweet Anne between
The sighing lips and downcast eyes,
And said, "Old breaking hearts are lies."

Three hours have come, three hours have gone;
King Edward, with his crownet on,
Sits highest where the feast is set;
With wine the sweetest lips are wet;
The music makes a heaven above,
And underneath is talk of love.

The King look'd out from where he sat,
And cried "Sir Guy de Paul!" Thereat
The music stopp'd with awe and wonder,
Like discourse when speaks the thunder;
And the feasters, one and all,
Gazed upon Sir Guy de Paul.

"How chanceth it, Sir Guy de Paul,
Your daughter graceth not the call
To the feast at Earl-Mount Hall?
My friends here boast her like the Queen:
What maketh such a face unseen?"

"Sir," quoth Sir Guy, "a loyal breast
Hath brought a man here sore distress'd.
My daughter, through device, 'tis fear'd,
Of some false knight, hath disappear'd."

"Hah!" quoth the King, "since when, I pray?
They tell me, 'twas but yesterday
That she was mark'd, for two long hours,
Praying behind her window-flowers."

"Alas! sir, 'twas at night.—Forgive
My failing speech. I scarcely live
Till I have sought her, high and low,
And know, what then the King shall know."

"Now God confound all snares, and bring
Base hearts to sorrow!" cried the King;
"Myself will aid thee, and full soon.
Ho! master bard, good Rafe de Boon,
Pinch thy fair harp, and make it tell
Of those old thieves who slept so well."

The minstrel bowed with blushing glee;
His harp into his arms took he,
And rous'd its pulses to a mood
Befitting love and hardihood.

Then, with his ready wit sincere,
He sang to every tingling ear,
How fifteen brave old beards, one night,
Bore off one lady in a fright;
With what amazing knees they kept
Their saddles, and how fiercely slept;
And how a certain palfrey chose
To leave them to their proud repose,
And through the wildering night-time bear
The lady to her lover's care.
He named no names, he drew no face,
Yet not a soul mistook the case;
Till by degrees, boards, tap'stries, rafters,
Echoed the King's and feasters' laughters;
And once again, all Earl-Mount Hall
Gazed upon Sir Guy de Paul.

But how the laughter raged and scream'd,
When lo! those fifteen beards all stream'd
In at the great door of the hall!
Those very grey-beards, one and all,
By the King's command in thrall,
All mounted, and all scar'd withal,
And scarlet as Sir Guy de Paul!
By heavens! 'twas "merry in the hall,"
When every beard but those "wagg'd all."

Out spoke the King with wrathful breath,
Smiting the noise as still as death;
"Are these the suitors to destroy
My projects with new tales of Troy?
These the bold knights and generous lords
To wed our heiresses and wards?
Now, too, while Frenchman and while Scot
Have cost us double swords, God wot!
Are these replenishers of nations?
Begetters of great generations?
Out with them all! and bring to light
A fitter and a fairer sight."

Queen Eleanor glanc'd down the hall,
She pitied old Sir Guy de Paul,
Who, while these doters went their way,
Knew neither how to go nor stay,
But sate bent close, his shame to smother,
Rubbing one hand upon the other.
A page she sent him, bright and mild,
Who led him forth, like his own child.

Out went the beards by a side door;
The great one roll'd apart once more,
And, as the King had given command,
In rode a couple, hand in hand,

Who made the stillness stiller:—he
A man to grace all jeopardy;
And all a lovely comfort, she.
The stalwart youth bestrode a steed,
A Barbary, the King's own breed;
The lady grac'd her palfrey still,
Sweet beast, that ever hath his will,
And paceth now beside his lord,
Straight for the King at the high board,
Till sharp the riders halt, and wait
The speaking of the crownèd state,—
The knight with reverential eyes,
Whose grateful hope no claim implies:
The lady in a bashful glow,
Her bosom billowing to and fro.

"Welcome! Sir William de la Barre,"
The monarch cried; "a right good star
For ladies' palfreys led astray;
And welcome his fair flower of May.
By heavens! I will not have my knights
Defrauded of their lady rights.
I give thee, William de la Barre,
For this thy bride, and that thy scar
Won from the big-limb'd traitor Pole,
The day thou dash'dst out half his soul

And lett'st his ransom free, for ruth
(For which thou wert a foolish youth),
All those good meadows, lately his,
Down by the Brent, where thy hall is,
And all my rights in that same hall,
Together with the osieries all
That skirt the streams by down and dale,
From Hendon into Perivale.
And now dismount. And hark ye, there,
Sir Priest, my chaplain Christopher,
(See how the honest body dries
The tears of claret in his eyes !)—
Come and betroth these friends of mine,
Till at the good Earl's chapel shrine
Thy holy magic make them one:
The King and Queen will see it done.
But first a royal health to all
The friends we leave in this fair hall;
And may all knights' and ladies' horses
Take, like the palfrey, vigorous courses !"

With princely laughter rose the King,
Rose all, the laughter echoing,
Rose the proud wassail, rose the shout
By the trumpets long stretch'd out;

You would have thought that roof and all
Rose in that heart-lifted hall.
On their knees are two alone;
The palfrey and the barb have gone:
And then arose those two beside,
And the music from its pride
Falls into a beauteous prayer,
Like an angel quitting air;
And the King and his soft Queen
Smile upon those two serene,
Whom the priest, accosting bland,
Puts, full willing, hand in hand.
Ah scarcely even King and Queen
Did they then perceive, I ween,
Nor well to after-memory call,
How they went from out that hall.

What more? Sir Guy, and then Sir Grey,
Died each upon a fine spring day;
And, in their hatred of things small,
Left him, now wanting nothing, all:
(All which, at least, that mighty claw
Permitted them, yclept the law).
The daughter wept, and wept the more
To think her tears would soon be o'er;

Sir William neither wept nor smil'd,
But grac'd the father for the child,
And sent, to join the funeral shows,
Bearing scutcheons, bearing woes,
The palfrey; and full well he goes;
Oh! merrily well the palfrey goes;
Grief, great as any there, he knows,
Yet merrily ever the palfrey goes.

THE GLOVE AND THE LIONS.

KING FRANCIS was a hearty king, and lov'd a royal sport,
And one day, as his lions fought, sat looking on the court;
The nobles fill'd the benches, and the ladies in their pride,
And 'mongst them sat the Count de Lorge, with one for whom he sigh'd:
And truly 'twas a gallant thing to see that crowning show,
Valour and love, and a king above, and the royal beasts below.

Ramp'd and roar'd the lions, with horrid laughing jaws;
They bit, they glared, gave blows like beams, a wind went with their paws;
With wallowing might and stifled roar they roll'd on one another,
Till all the pit with sand and mane was in a thunderous smother;

The bloody foam above the bars came whisking through
the air;
Said Francis then, "Faith, gentlemen, we're better
here than there."

De Lorge's love o'erheard the King, a beauteous lively
dame
With smiling lips and sharp bright eyes, which alway
seem'd the same;
She thought, the Count my lover is brave as brave
can be;
He surely would do wondrous things to show his love
of me;
King, ladies, lovers, all look on; the occasion is
divine;
I'll drop my glove, to prove his love; great glory will
be mine.

She dropp'd her glove, to prove his love, then look'd at
him and smil'd;
He bow'd, and in a moment leap'd among the lions
wild:
The leap was quick, return was quick, he has regain'd
his place,
Then threw the glove, but not with love, right in the
lady's face.

"By Heav'n!" said Francis, "rightly done!" and he
rose from where he sat:
"No love," quoth he, "but vanity, sets love a task
like that."*

* "Lions' Street took its name from the building and courts wherein were kept the King's great and small lions. One day, whilst Francis the First amused himself with looking at a combat between his lions, a lady having let her glove drop, said to De Lorges, 'If you would have me believe that you love me as much as you swear you do, go and recover my glove.' De Lorges went down, took up the glove in the midst of these furious animals, returned, and threw it in the lady's face; and notwithstanding all the advances she made, and all the arts she used, would never see her afterwards."

Historical Essays upon Paris, translated from the French of M. de Saint Foix. (Lond. 1767.) Vol. i. p. 149. St. Foix quotes from Brantôme.

ABOU BEN ADHEM.

Abou Ben Adhem (may his tribe increase!)
Awoke one night from a deep dream of peace,
And saw, within the moonlight in his room,
Making it rich, and like a lily in bloom,
An angel writing in a book of gold:—
Exceeding peace had made Ben Adhem bold,
And to the presence in the room he said,
"What writest thou?"—The vision rais'd its head,
And with a look made of all sweet accord,
Answer'd, "The names of those who love the Lord."
"And is mine one?" said Abou. "Nay; not so,"
Replied the angel. Abou spoke more low,
But cheerly still; and said, "I pray thee then,
"Write me as one that loves his fellow men."

The angel wrote, and vanish'd. The next night
It came again with a great wakening light,
And show'd the names whom love of God had bless'd,
And lo! Ben Adhem's name led all the rest.

GODIVA.

INSCRIBED TO JOHN HUNTER.

JOHN HUNTER, friend of Leigh Hunt's verse, and
lover of all duty,
Hear how the boldest naked deed was clothed in
saintliest beauty.

Earl Lefric by his hasty oath must solemnly abide;
He thought to put a hopeless bar, and finds it turn'd
aside;
His lady, to remove the toll that makes the land for-
lorn,
Will surely ride through Coventry, naked as she was
born:
She said—The people will be kind; they love a gentle
deed;
They piously will turn from me, nor shame a friend in
need.

Earl Lefric, half in holy dread, and half in loving
care,
Hath bade the people all keep close, in penitence and
prayer;

The windows are fast boarded up; nor hath a sound
been heard
Since yester-eve, save household dog, or latest summer
bird;
Only Saint Mary's bell begins at intervals to go,
Which is to last till all be past, to let obedience know.

The mass is said; the priest hath bless'd the lady's
pious will;
Then down the stairs she comes undress'd, but in a
mantle still;
Her ladies are about her close, like mist about a star;
She speaks some little cheerful words, but knows not
what they are;
The door is pass'd; the saddle press'd; her body feels
the air;
Then down they let, from out its net, her locks of
piteous hair.

Oh, then how every list'ner feels, the palfrey's foot
that hears!
The rudest are awed suddenly, the soft and brave in
tears;
The poorest that were most in need of what the lady
did,
Deem her a blessed creature born to rescue men forbid:

He that had said they could have died for her beloved
sake,
Had rated low the thanks of woe. Death frights not
old Heart-ache.

Sweet saint! No shameless brow was hers, who could
not bear to see,
For thinking of her happier lot, the pine of
poverty:
No unaccustom'd deed she did, in scorn of custom's
self,
She that but wish'd the daily bread upon the poor
man's shelf.
Naked she went, to clothe the naked. New she was,
and bold,
Only because she held the laws which Mercy preach'd
of old.

They say she blush'd to be beheld, e'en of her ladies'
eyes;
Then took her way with downward look, and brief,
bewilder'd sighs.
A downward look; a beating heart; a sense of the
new, vast,
Wide, open, naked world, and yet of every door she
pass'd;

A pray'r, a tear, a constant mind, a listening ear that
glow'd,
These we may dare to fancy there, on that religious
road.

But who shall blind his heart with more? Who dare,
with lavish guess,
Refuse the grace she hoped of us, in her divine distress?
In fancy still she holds her way, for ever pacing on,
The sight unseen, the guiltless Eve, the shame un-
breath'd upon;
The step, that upon Duty's ear is growing more and
more,
Though yet, alas! it hath to pass by many a scorner's
door.

JAFFÀR

INSCRIBED TO THE MEMORY OF SHELLEY.

SHELLEY, take this to thy dear memory;—
To praise the generous, is to think of thee.

Jaffàr, the Barmecide, the good Vizier,
The poor man's hope, the friend without a peer,
Jaffàr was dead, slain by a doom unjust;
And guilty Hàroun, sullen with mistrust
Of what the good and e'en the bad might say,
Ordain'd that no man living from that day
Should dare to speak his name on pain of death.—
All Araby and Persia held their breath.

All but the brave Mondeer.—He, proud to show
How far for love a grateful soul could go,
And facing death for very scorn and grief
(For his great heart wanted a great relief),
Stood forth in Bagdad, daily, in the square
Where once had stood a happy house; and there

Harangued the tremblers at the scymitar
On all they owed to the divine Jaffàr.

"Bring me this man," the caliph cried. The man
Was brought—was gaz'd upon. The mutes began
To bind his arms. "Welcome, brave cords!" cried he;
"From bonds far worse Jaffàr deliver'd me;
From wants, from shames, from loveless household fears;
Made a man's eyes friends with delicious tears;
Restor'd me—lov'd me—put me on a par
With his great self. How can I pay Jaffàr?"

Haroun, who felt, that on a soul like this
The mightiest vengeance could but fall amiss,
Now deign'd to smile, as one great lord of fate
Might smile upon another half as great.
He said, "Let worth grow frenzied, if it will;
The caliph's judgment shall be master still.
Go: and since gifts thus move thee, take this gem,
The richest in the Tartar's diadem,
And hold the giver as thou deemest fit."

"Gifts!" cried the friend. He took; and holding it
High tow'rds the heavens, as though to meet his star,
Exclaim'd, "This, too, I owe to thee, Jaffàr!"

THE BITTER GOURD.*

Lokman the Wise, therefore the Good (for wise
Is but sage good, seeing with final eyes),
Was slave once to a lord, jealous though kind,
Who, piqued sometimes at the man's master mind,
Gave him, one day, to see how he would treat
So strange a grace, a bitter gourd to eat.

With simplest reverence, and no surprise,
The sage receiv'd what stretch'd the donor's eyes;
And, piece by piece, as though it had been food
To feast and gloat on, every morsel chew'd;
And so stood eating, with his patient beard,
Till all the nauseous favour disappear'd.

Vex'd, and confounded, and dispos'd to find
Some ground of scorn, on which to ease his mind,
"Lokman!" exclaim'd his master,—"In God's name,
Where could the veriest slave get soul so tame?

* The ground-work of this story is in D'Herbelot, and other Eastern authorities. Lokman has sometimes been called the Arabian Æsop; and sometimes thought to have been Æsop himself.

Have all my favours been bestow'd amiss?
Or could not brains like thine have saved thee this?"

Calmly stood Lokman still, as duty stands.—
"Have I receiv'd," he answer'd, "at thine hands
Favours so sweet they went to mine heart's root,
And could I not accept one bitter fruit?"

"O Lokman!" said his lord (and as he spoke,
For very love his words in softness broke),
"Take but this favour yet:—be slave no more:—
Be, as thou art, my friend and counsellor:—
Oh be; nor let me quit thee, self-abhorr'd;—
'Tis I that am the slave, and thou the lord."

THE INEVITABLE.

INSCRIBED TO JOHN FORSTER.

FORSTER, whose voice can speak of awe so well,
And stern disclosures, new and terrible,
This were a tale, my friend, for thee to tell.
Seek for it then in some old book; but take
Meantime this version, for the writer's sake.

The royal sage, lord of the Magic Ring,
Solomon, once upon a morn in spring,
By Cedron, in his garden's rosiest walk,
Was pacing with a pleasant guest in talk,
When they beheld, approaching, but with face
Yet undiscern'd, a stranger in the place.

How he came there, what wanted, who could be,
How dare, unusher'd, beard such privacy,
Whether 'twas some great Spirit of the Ring,
And if so, why he should thus daunt the king
(For the ring's master, after one sharp gaze,
Stood waiting, more in trouble than amaze),

All this the courtier would have ask'd; but fear
Palsied his utterance, as the man drew near.

The stranger seem'd (to judge him by his dress)
One of mean sort, a dweller with distress,
Or some poor pilgrim; but the steps he took
Belied it with strange greatness; and his look
Open'd a page in a tremendous book.

He wore a cowl, from under which there shone,
Full on the guest, and on the guest alone,
A face, not of this earth, half veil'd in gloom
And radiance, but with eyes like lamps of doom,
Which, ever as they came, before them sent
Rebuke, and staggering, and astonishment,
With sense of change, and worse of change to be,
Sore sighing, and extreme anxiety,
And feebleness, and faintness, and moist brow,
The past a scoff, the future crying "Now!"
All that makes wet the pores, and lifts the hair;
All that makes dying vehemence despair,
Knowing it must be dragg'd it knows not where.

Th' excess of fear and anguish, which had tied
The courtier's tongue, now loos'd it, and he cried,

"O royal master! Sage! Lord of the Ring,
I cannot bear the horror of this thing;
Help with thy mighty art. Wish me, I pray,
On the remotest mountain of Cathay."

Solomon wish'd, and the man vanish'd. Straight
Up comes the terror, with his orbs of fate.

"Solomon," with a lofty voice said he,
"How came that man here, wasting time with thee?
I was to fetch him, ere the close of day,
From the remotest mountain of Cathay."

Solomon said, bowing him to the ground,
"Angel of Death, there will the man be found."

WALLACE AND FAWDON.

This ballad was suggested by one of the notes to the *Lay of the Last Minstrel*. Wallace, the great Scottish patriot, had been defeated in a sharp encounter with the English. He was forced to retreat with only sixteen followers; the English pursued him with a bloodhound; and his sole chance of escape from that tremendous investigator was either in baffling the scent altogether (which was impossible, unless fugitives could take to the water, and continue there for some distance), or in confusing it by the spilling of blood. For the latter purpose, a captive was sometimes sacrificed; in which case the hound stopped upon the body.

The supernatural part of the story of Fawdon is treated by its first relater, Harry the Minstrel, as a mere legend, and that not a very credible one; but as a mere legend it is very fine, and quite sufficient for poetical purposes; nor should the old poet's philosophy have thought proper to gainsay it. Nevertheless, as the mysteries of the conscience are more awful things than any merely gratuitous terror (besides leaving optical phenomena quite as real as the latter may find them), even the supernatural part of the story becomes probable when we consider the agitations which the noble mind of Wallace may have undergone during such trying physical circumstances, and such extremes of moral responsibility. It seems clear, that however necessary the death of Fawdon may have been to his companions, or to Scotland, his slayer regretted it; I have suggested the kind of reason which he would most likely have had for the regret; and upon the whole, it is my opinion, that Wallace actually saw the visions, and that the legend originated in the fact. I do not mean to imply that Fawdon became present, embodied or

disembodied, whatever may have been the case with his image. I only say that what the legend reports Wallace to have seen, was actually in the hero's eyes. The remainder of the question I leave to the psychologist.

PART THE FIRST.

WALLACE with his sixteen men
Is on his weary way;
They have hasting been all night,
And hasting been all day;
And now, to lose their only hope,
They hear the bloodhound bay.

The bloodhound's bay comes down the wind,
Right upon the road;
Town and tower are yet to pass,
With not a friend's abode.

Wallace neither turn'd nor spake;
Closer drew the men;
Little had they said that day,
But most went cursing then.

Oh! to meet twice sixteen foes
Coming from English ground,
And leave their bodies on the track,
To cheat King Edward's hound.

Oh! to overtake one wretch
That left them in the fight,
And leave him cloven to the ribs,
To mock the bloody spite.

Suddenly dark Fawdon stopp'd,
As they near'd a town;
He stumbled with a desperate oath,
And cast him fiercely down.

He said, "The leech took all my strength,
My body is unblest;
Come dog, come devil, or English rack,
Here must Fawdon rest."

Fawdon was an Irishman
Had join'd them in the war;
Four orphan children waited him
Down by Eden Scawr.

But Wallace hated Fawdon's ways,
That were both fierce and shy;
And at his words he turn'd, and said,
"That's a traitor's lie.

"No thought is thine of lingering here,
A captive for the hound;
Thine eye is bright; thy lucky flesh

Hath not a single wound:
The moment we depart, the lane
Will see thee from the ground."

Fawdon would not speak nor stir,
Speak as any might;
Scorn'd or sooth'd, he sat and lour'd,
As though in angry spite.

Wallace drew a little back,
And waved his men apart;
And Fawdon half leap'd up, and cried,
"Thou wilt not have the heart!"

Wallace with his dreadful sword,
Without further speech,
Clean cut off dark Fawdon's head,
Through its stifled screech:

Through its stifled screech, and through
The arm that fenc'd his brow;
And Fawdon, as he leap'd, fell dead,
And safe is Wallace now.

Safe is Wallace with his men,
And silent is the hound;
And on their way to Castle Gask
They quit the sullen ground.

PART THE SECOND.

WALLACE lies in Castle Gask,
Safely with his men;
Not a soul has come, three days,
Within the warder's ken.

Safely with his men lies Wallace,
Yet he fareth ill:
There is fever in his blood;
His mind may not be still.

It was night, and all were housed,
Talking long and late;
Who is this that blows the horn
At the castle-gate?

Who is this that blows a horn?
Which none but Wallace hears?
Loud and louder grows the blast
In his frenzied ears.

He sends by twos, he sends by threes,
He sends them all to learn;
He stands upon the stairs, and calls,
But none of them return.

Wallace flings him forth down stairs;
And there the moonlight fell
Across the yard upon a sight,
That makes him seem in hell.

Fawdon's headless trunk he sees,
With an arm in air,
Brandishing his bloody head
By the swinging hair.

Wallace with a stifled screech
Turn'd and fled amain,
Up the stairs, and through the bowers,
With a burning brain:

From a window Wallace leap'd
Fifteen feet to ground,
And never stopp'd till fast within
A nunnery's holy bound.

And then he turn'd, in gasping doubt,
To see the fiend retire,
And saw him not at hand, but saw
Castle Gask on fire.

All on fire was Castle Gask;
And on its top, endued
With the bulk of half a tower,
Headless Fawdon stood.

Wide he held a burning beam,
And blackly fill'd the light;
His body seem'd, by some black art,
To look at Wallace, heart to heart,
Threatening through the night.

Wallace that day week arose
From a feeble bed;
And gentle though he was before,
Yet now to orphans evermore
He gentlier bow'd his head.

KILSPINDIE.*

King James to royal Stirling town
Was riding from the chase,
When he was ware of a banish'd man
Return'd without his grace.

The man stood forward from the crowd
In act to make appeal:
Said James, but in no pleasant tone,
"Yonder is my Grey-steel."

He knew him not by his attire,
Which was but poor in plight;
He knew him not by his brown curls,
For they were turn'd to white;

He knew him not by followers,
For want had made them strange;
He knew him by his honest look,
Which time could never change.

* For the subject of this story I am indebted to a note in the Introduction to the *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border.*

Kilspindie was a Douglas bold,
Who, when the king was young,
Had pleas'd him like the grim Grey-steel,
Of whom sweet verse is sung:*

Had pleas'd him by his sword that cropp'd
The knights of their renown,
And by a foot so fleet and firm,
No horse could tire it down.

But James hath sworn an angry oath,
That as he was King crown'd,
No Douglas ever more should set
His foot on Scottish ground.

Too bold had been the Douglas race,
Too haughty and too strong;
Only Kilspindie of them all
Had never done him wrong.

"A boon! a boon!" Kilspindie cried;
"Pardon that here am I:
In France I have grown old and sad,
In Scotland I would die."

* See passages of it in Ellis's *Specimens of Early English Metrical Romances*, vol. iii. The whole of the original is to be found in a Scottish volume, the title of which I forget.

Kilspindie knelt, Kilspindie bent,
His Douglas pride was gone;
The King he neither spoke nor look'd,
But sternly rode straight on.

Kilspindie rose, and pace for pace
Held on beside the train,
His cap in hand, his looks in hope,
His heart in doubt and pain.

Before them lay proud Stirling hill,
The way grew steep and strong;
The King shook bridle suddenly,
And up swept all the throng.

Kilspindie said within himself,
"He thinks of Auld Lang Syne,
And wishes pleasantly to see
What strength may still be mine."

On rode the court, Kilspindie ran,
His smile grew half distress'd;
There wasn't a man in that company,
Save one, but wish'd him rest.

Still on they rode, and still ran he,
His breath he scarce could get;
There wasn't a man in that company,
Save one, with eyes unwet.

The King has enter'd Stirling town,
Nor ever graced him first;
Kilspindie sat him down, and ask'd
Some water for his thirst.

But they had mark'd the monarch's face,
And how he kept his pride;
And old Kilspindie in his need
Is water's self denied.

Ten weeks thereafter, sever'd still
From Scotland's dear embrace,
Kilspindie died of broken heart,
Sped by that cruel race.

Ten years thereafter, his last breath
King James as sadly drew;
And though he died of many thoughts,
Kilspindie cross'd him too.

THE TRUMPETS OF DOOLKARNEIN.

In Eastern history are two Iskanders, or Alexanders, who are sometimes confounded, and both of whom are called Doolkarnein, or the Two-Horned, in allusion to their subjugation of East and West, horns being an oriental symbol of power.

One of these heroes is Alexander of Macedon, the other a conqueror of more ancient times, who built the marvellous series of ramparts on Mount Caucasus, known in fable as the wall of Gog and Magog, that is to say, of the people of the North. It reached from the Euxine Sea to the Caspian, where its flanks originated the subsequent appellation of the Caspian Gates. See (among other passages in the same work) the article entitled "Jagioug et Magioug" in D'Herbelot's *Bibliothèque Orientale.*

The story of the Trumpets, on which the present poem is founded, is quoted by Major Price, in his *History of the Arabs before the Time of Mahomet*, from the old Italian collection of tales entitled the *Pecorone*, the work of Ser Giovanni Fiorentino.

With awful walls, far glooming, that possèss'd
The passes 'twixt the snow-fed Caspian fountains,
Doolkarnein, the dread lord of East and West,
Shut up the northern nations in their mountains;
And upon platforms where the oak-trees grew,
Trumpets he set, huge beyond dreams of wonder,
Craftily purpos'd, when his arms withdrew,
To make him thought still hous'd there, like the thunder;

And it so fell; for when the winds blew right,
They woke the trumpets to their calls of might.

Unseen, but heard, their calls the trumpets blew,
  Ringing the granite rocks, their only bearers,
Till the long fear into religion grew,
  And never more those heights had human darers.
Dreadful Doolkarnein was an earthly god;
  His walls but shadow'd forth his mightier frowning;
Armies of giants at his bidding trod
  From realm to realm, king after king discrowning.
When thunder spoke, or when the earthquake stirr'd,
Then, muttering in accord, his host was heard.

But when the winters marr'd the mountain shelves,
  And softer changes came with vernal mornings,
Something had touch'd the trumpets' lofty selves,
  And less and less rang forth their sovereign warnings:
Fewer and feebler; as when silence spreads
  In plague-struck tents, where haughty chiefs, left dying,
Fail by degrees upon their angry beds,
  Till, one by one, ceases the last stern sighing.
One by one, thus, their breath the trumpets drew,
Till now no more the imperious music blew.

Is he then dead? Can great Doolkarnein die?
Or can his endless hosts elsewhere be needed?
Were the great breaths that blew his minstrelsy
Phantoms, that faded as himself receded?
Or is he anger'd? Surely he still comes;
This silence ushers the dread visitation;
Sudden will burst the torrent of his drums,
And then will follow bloody desolation.
So did fear dream; though now, with not a sound
To scare good hope, summer had twice crept round.

Then gather'd in a band, with lifted eyes,
The neighbours, and those silent heights ascended.
Giant, nor aught blasting their bold emprize,
They met, though twice they halted, breath-suspended;
Once, at a coming like a god's in rage
With thunderous leaps; but 'twas the piled snow, falling;
And once, when in the woods, an oak, for age,
Fell dead, the silence with its groan appalling.
At last they came where still, in dread array,
As though they still might speak, the trumpets lay.

Unhurt they lay, like caverns above ground,
The rifted rocks, for hands, about them clinging,

Their tubes as straight, their mighty mouths as round
And firm, as when the rocks were first set ringing.
Fresh from their unimaginable mould
They might have seem'd, save that the storms had stain'd them
With a rich rust, that now, with gloomy gold
In the bright sunshine, beauteously engrain'd them.
Breathless the gazers look'd, nigh faint for awe,
Then leap'd, then laugh'd. What was it now they saw?

Myriads of birds. Myriads of birds, that fill'd
The trumpets all with nests and nestling voices!
The great, huge, stormy music had been still'd
By the soft needs that nurs'd those small, sweet noises!
O thou Doolkarnein, where is now thy wall?
Where now thy voice divine and all thy forces?
Great was thy cunning, but its wit was small
Compar'd with Nature's least and gentlest courses.
Fears and false creeds may fright the realms awhile;
But Heaven and Earth abide their time, and smile.

ABRAHAM AND THE FIRE-WORSHIPPER.*

A Dramatic Parable.

SCENE—*The inside of a Tent, in which the Patriarch* ABRAHAM *and a Persian Traveller, a* Fire-Worshipper, *are sitting awhile after supper.*

Fire-Worshipper (*aside*). What have I said or done, that by degrees
Mine host hath chang'd his gracious countenance,
Until he stareth on me, as in wrath!
Have I, 'twixt wake and sleep, lost his wise lore?
Or sit I thus too long, and he himself
Would fain be sleeping? I will speak to that.
(*Aloud.*) Impute it, O my great and gracious lord,
Unto my feeble flesh, and not my folly,
If mine old eyelids droop against their will,
And I become as one that hath no sense
E'en to the milk and honey of thy words.—
With my lord's leave, and his good servant's help,
My limbs would creep to bed.

* The groundwork of this story is to be found in the works of Dr. Franklin.

Abraham (*angrily quitting his seat*). In this tent, never.
Thou art a thankless and an impious man.

Fire-W. (*rising in astonishment*). A thankless and an impious man! Oh, sir,
My thanks have all but worshipp'd thee.

Abraham. And whom
Forgotten? like the fawning dog I feed.
From the foot-washing to the meal, and now
To this thy cramm'd and dog-like wish for bed,
I've noted thee; and never hast thou breath'd
One syllable of prayer, or praise, or thanks,
To the great God who made and feedeth all.

Fire-W. Oh, sir, the god I worship is the Fire,
The god of gods; and seeing him not here
In any symbol, or on any shrine,
I waited till he bless'd mine eyes at morn,
Sitting in heaven.

Abraham. Oh, foul idolator!
And dar'st thou still to breathe in Abraham's tent?
Forth with thee, wretch: for he that made thy god,
And all thy tribe, and all the host of heaven,
The invisible and only dreadful God,
Will speak to thee this night, out in the storm,
And try thee in thy foolish god, the fire,
Which with his fingers he makes lightnings of.

Hark to the rising of his robes, the winds,
And get thee forth, and wait him.

[*A violent storm is heard rising.*

Fire-W. What! unhous'd!
And on a night like this! me, poor old man,
A hundred years of age!
Abraham (*urging him away.*) Not reverencing
The God of ages, thou revoltest reverence.
Fire-W. Thou hadst a father:—think of his grey hairs,
Houseless, and cuff'd by such a storm as this.
Abraham. God is thy father, and thou own'st not him.
Fire-W. I have a wife, as aged as myself,
And if she learn my death, she'll not survive it,
No, not a day, she is so used to me,
So propp'd up by her other feeble self.
I pray thee, strike us not both down.
Abraham (*still urging him*). God made
Husband and wife, and must be own'd of them,
Else he must needs disown them.
Fire-W. We have children,
One of them, sir, a daughter, who, next week,
Will all day long be going in and out,
Upon the watch for me; she, too, a wife,

And will be soon a mother. Spare, O spare her!
She's a good creature, and not strong.

Abraham. Mine ears
Are deaf to all things but thy blasphemy,
And to the coming of the Lord and God,
Who will this night condemn thee.

[ABRAHAM *pushes him out, and remains alone, speaking.*

For if ever
God came at night-time forth upon the world,
'Tis now this instant. Hark to the huge winds,
The cataracts of hail, and rocky thunder,
Splitting like quarries of the stony clouds,
Beneath the touching of the foot of God.

[*A tremendous crash of thunder, nearly overhead, ending in awful mutterings.*

That was God's speaking in the heavens,—that last
And inward utterance coming by itself.
What is it shaketh thus thy servant, Lord,
Making him fear, that in some loud rebuke
To this idolator, whom thou abhorrest,
Terror will slay himself? Lo, the earth quakes
Beneath my feet, and God is surely here.

[*A dead silence; and then a still small voice.*

The Voice. Abraham!

Abraham. Where art thou, Lord? and who is it
that speaks
So sweetly in mine ear, to bid me turn
And dare to face his presence?
The Voice. Who but He
Whose mightiest utterance thou hast yet to learn?
I was not in the whirlwind, Abraham;
I was not in the thunder, or the earthquake;
But I am in the still small voice.
Where is the stranger whom thou tookest in?
Abraham. Lord, he denied thee, and I drove him forth.
The Voice. Then didst thou do what God himself
forebore.
Have I, although he did deny me, borne
With his injuriousness these hundred years,
And couldst thou not endure him one sole night,
And such a night as this?
Abraham. Lord! I have sinn'd,
And will go forth, and if he be not dead,
Will call him back, and tell him of thy mercies
Both to himself and me.
The Voice. Behold, and learn!

[*The voice retires while it is speaking; and a fold of the tent is turned back, disclosing the* FIRE-WORSHIPPER, *who is calmly sleeping, with his head on the back of a house-lamb.*

Abraham. O loving God! the lamb itself's his pillow,
And on his forehead is a balmy dew,
And in his sleep he smileth. I, meantime,
Poor and proud fool, with my presumptuous hands,
Not God's, was dealing judgments on his head,
Which God himself had cradled!—Oh, methinks
There's more in this than prophet yet hath known,
And Faith, some day, will all in Love be shown.

DEATH AND THE RUFFIANS.*

MODERNIZED FROM CHAUCER.

It is becoming less and less necessary to inform new readers of books, that the *Canterbury Tales* of Chaucer, from two of which the following modernizations are made, are stories supposed to be told by a set of pilgrims, under the guidance of their tavern host, as they are journeying on horseback to the shrine of St. Thomas à Becket.

The reader will do me great injustice, if he thinks that modernizations like these are intended as substitutes for what they modernize. Their only plea for indulgence is, that they may act as incitements towards acquaintance with the great original. Chaucer's stories are all complete of their kind, all interesting in their plots, and surprising in their terminations; and the satirical stories are as full of amusement, as the serious are of nobleness and pathos. It is therefore scarcely possible to repeat any one of them, in any way, without producing, in intelligent readers, a desire to know more of him; and so far, and so far only, such ventures as the first of the two following become excusable. I heartily agree with those

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* The story of *Death and the Ruffians* is the tale told by the "Pardoner;" who was an officer of the Papal church for the sale of pardons and indulgences; one of the set of men whose enormities precipitated the Reformation. He tells this admirable story in the tone of a good man, though he has prefaced it (in the original) with an impudent confession of his knavery.

critics who are of opinion, that no modernizations of Chaucer, however masterly they might be, could do him justice; for either they must be little else but re-spellings (in which case they had better be wholly such at once, like Mr. Clarke's, and profess to be nothing but aids to perusal), or, secondly, they must be something betwixt old style and new, and so reap the advantages of neither (which is the case, I fear, with the one just mentioned); or lastly, like the otherwise admirable versions by Dryden and Pope, they must take leave *in toto* of the old manner of the original, and proceed upon the merits, whatever those may be, of the style of the modernizers; in which case Chaucer is sure to lose, not only in manner, but in matter.

"Conscience," for example, is now a word of two syllables. In Chaucer's time it was a word of three,—*Con-sci-ence*. How is a modern hand to fill up the concluding line in the character of the Nun, without spoiling it?

"And all was con-sci-ence and tender heart."

"*A* tender heart" would not do at all; nor can you find any monosyllable that would.

So, still more emphatically, in the use of the old negative *n'as* (was not) in the exquisite couplet about the officious lawyer—

"No where so busy a man as he there *n'as*,

(Pronounce *noz*),

"And yet he seemèd busier than he was."

Here the capital rhyme with those two smart peremptory monosyllables (*nŏz* and *woz*) and consequently the perfection of the couplet, and part of the very spirit of the wit, must be lost in the necessity for turning the old words into new.

Readers, therefore, will be good enough to take one of the stories here modernized, simply for what I describe it. They are to suppose it told on the railway, only as an imperfect specimen of what they will hear better from the lips of our great acquaintance himself, when they come to know him.

But what am I to say of the other specimen, or rather non-specimen, the fragment of the story of Cambus? All I can say is the truth; and so leave it to shift for itself, as it best may. It was the beginning of an attempt, many years ago, to make a complete story for Chaucer's fragment out of my acquaintance with stories of the East. Never, for an instant, did the preposterous idea of emulation enter my head. I could not pretend to complete the fragment in Chaucer's manner; and therefore intended, with many loving apologies, to relate the whole story, as well as I could, in my own. Chaucer's words, however, as the reader may perceive, would still haunt me; Milton's wish to have heard the rest of the story from the old poet, began to haunt me too, and to frighten me; and in spite of many longings to bring my beloved Arabian Nights into play on the subject, I let the project go from me, with the assistance of many cares.

Why then do I here republish it? Because, apart from the perilous shade which it conjures up, I think there is something of "tropical blood" in it, not too common, or undesirable, in English verse-making; and because also there is something in Eastern stories of all kinds, which, being loth to part with it myself, I am apt to suppose equally in favour with the lovers of story-telling in general.

Three drunken ruffians, madly believing Death to be an embodied person, go out to kill him. They meet him in the shape of an old man, who tells them where Death is to be found; and they find him accordingly.

In Flanders there was once a desperate set
Of three young spendthrifts, fierce with drink and debt,
Who, haunting every sink of foul repute,
And giddy with the din of harp and lute,

Went dancing and sat gambling day and night,
And swill'd and gorg'd beyond their natures' might,
And thus upon the devil's own altar laid
The bodies and the souls that God had made.

So horribly they swore with every word,
They seem'd to think the Jews had spar'd our Lord,
That rent his body; and the worse they swore,
And scoff'd, and sinn'd, they did but laugh the more.

Their doors were ever turning on the pin
To let their timbrellers and tumblers in,
Sellers of cakes and such-like;—every one
A devil's own help to see his business done,
And blow up fires, far better, Sirs, made less,
Out of th' accursed fuel of excess.

These wretches, having lost one night at play,
Were drinking still by the sad dawn of day,
When hearing a bell go for some one dead,
They curs'd, and call'd the vintner's boy, and said,
"Who's he that has been made cold meat to-night?
Ask the fool's name, and see you bring it right?"

The boy who had been sick, and in whose head
Something had put strange and grave matter, said,
"Nay, Sirs, 'twas Hob, the smith. You knew him well;
A big-mouth'd, red-hair'd man; you call'd him Hell.
Last evening he was sitting, bolt upright,
Too drunk to speak, when in there came a wight
Whom men call *Death*, that slayeth high and low;
And with his staff Death fell'd him at a blow,
And so, without one word, betook him hence.
He hath slain heaps during the pestilence.
And, Sirs, they say, the boldest man had best
Beware how he invite so grim a guest,
Or be prepar'd to meet him, night and day.
'Tis what, long since, I've heard my mother say."

"Ay," quoth the vintner, "every word you hear
Is true as gospel. He hath slain this year,
And barely with his presence, half the place.
God grant we meet not with his dreadful face."

"God grant a fig's end," exclaim'd one. "Who's he
Goes blasting thus fools' eyes? Let's forth, we three,
And hunt him out, and punch the musty breath
Out of his bones, and be the death of Death."

'Twixt rage and liquor staggering forth they flung,
And on their impious oaths their changes rung,
And then would pause, and gathering all the breath
Their shouts had left them, cry out, "Death to Death!"

They had not gone a furlong, when they met,
Beside a bridge that cross'd a rivulet,
A poor old man, who meekly gave them way,
And bow'd, and said, "God save ye, Sirs, I pray."

The foremost swaggerer, prouder for the bow,
Said, "Well, old crawler, what art canting now?
Why art thou thus wrapp'd up, all save thy face?
Why liv'st so long, in such a sorry case?"

The old man began looking steadfastly
Into the speaker's visage, eye to eye,
And said, "Because I cannot find the man,
Nor could, though I had walk'd since time began,
No, not the poorest man, nor the least sage,
Who would exchange his youth for mine old age:
And therefore must I keep mine old age still,
As long as it shall please th' Almighty's will.
Death will not rid me of this aching breast;
And thus I walk, because I cannot rest,

And on the ground, my mother Nature's gate,
I knock with mine old staff, early and late,
And say to her,—Dear mother, let me in.
Lo! how I vanish, flesh, and blood, and skin.
When shall I sleep for good? Oh, mother dear,
The coffin which has stood this many a year
By my bedside, full gladly would I give
For a bare shroud, so I might cease to live;—
And yet she will not do me, Sirs, that grace;
For which full pale and wrinkled is my face.

"But, Sirs, in you it is no courtesy
To mock an old man, whosoe'er he be,
Much less a harmless man in deed and word.
The Scripture, as in church ye may have heard,
Saith,—'To an old man, hoar upon his head,
Ye shall bow down.' Therefore let this be said
By poor me now—Unto an old man do
Nought which in age ye'd not have done to you.—
And so God guard ye, Sirs, in weal or woe.
I must go onward, where I have to go."

"Nay," t'other cried, "Old Would-be Dead and Gone,
Thou partest not so lightly, by Saint John.
Thou spak'st but now of that false villain, Death,
Who stoppeth here a world of honest breath:

Where doth he bide? Tell us, or by the Lord,
And Judas, and the jump in hempen cord,
As surely as thou art his knave and spy,
We'll hang thee out, for thine old rheums to dry.
Thou art his privy nipper, thou old thief,
Blighting and blasting all in the green leaf."

"Sirs," quoth the old man, "spare, I pray, your breaths:
Death ye would find, and this your road is Death's.
Ye see yon spread of oaks, down by the brook;
There doth he lie, sunn'd in a flowery nook."

Death sunning in a flowery nook! How flies
Each drunkard o'er the sward, to smite him as he lies!

They reach the nook: and what behold they there!
No Death, but yet a sight to make them stare;
To make them stare, not out of mortal dread,
But only for huge bliss and stounded head;
To wit, pour'd forth, countless, and deep, and broad,
As if some cart had there discharg'd its load,
A bank of florins of fine gold,—all bright,
Fresh from the mint, plump, ponderous. What a sight!
They laugh'd, they leapt, they flung to earth, and roll'd
Their souls and bodies in the glorious gold;

And then they sat and commun'd; and the worst
Of all the three was he that spoke the first.

"God's life!" quoth he; "here's treasure! here's a day!
Hush;—look about. Now hark to what I say.
This store that luck hath sent us, boys,—ho! ho!
As freely as it came, shall it not go?
By G—, it shall; and precious nights we'll spend.
Who thought friend Death would make so good an end?
This is a wizard's work, to 'scape us, hey?
No matter. 'Tis hard gold, and well shall pay.
But how to store it, Sirs? to get it hous'd?
Help must be shunn'd. Men's marvel would be rous'd.
Wherefore I hold that we draw lots, and he
To whom it falls betake him suddenly
To town, and bring us victuals here, and wine,
Two keeping watch till all the three can dine;
And then at night we'll get us spades, and here,
In its own ground, the gold shall disappear."

The lots are drawn, the youngest thief sets off;
And then the first, after a little cough,
Resum'd—"I say,—we two are of one mind;
Thou know'st it well; and *he* but a mean hind.

'Twas always so. We were the merry men,
And he the churl and sot. Well, mark me then.
This heap of money, ravishing to see,
The fool supposes, must be shar'd by three.
But—hey? Just so. You think, as wise men do,
That three men's shares are better shar'd by two."

"Yet how?" said t'other.

"How!" said he:—"'tis done,
As easily as counting two to one.
He sitteth down: thou risest as in jest,
And while thou tumblest with him, breast to breast,
I draw my dirk, and thrust him in the side:
Thine follows mine; and then we two divide
The lovely gold. What say'st thou, dearest friend?
Lord! of our lusty life were seen no end."

The bond was made. The journeyer to the town
Meantime had in his heart roll'd up and down
The beauty of the florins, hard and bright.
"Christ Lord!" thought he, "what if I had the right
To all this treasure, my own self alone!
There's not a living man beneath the throne
Of God that should be half so blest as I."
And thus he ponder'd, till the Enemy,

The Fiend, who found his nature nothing loth,
Whisper'd him, "Poison them. They're villains both.
Always they cheat thee; sometimes beat thee; oft
Carp at thy brains. Prove now whose brains are soft."

With speed a shop he seeketh, where is sold
Poison for vermin; and a tale hath told
Of rats and polecats that molest his fowl.
"Sir," quoth the shopman, "God so guard my soul,
As thou shalt have a drug so pure and strong
To slay the knaves that do thy poultry wrong,
That were the hugest creature on God's earth
To taste it, stricken would be all his mirth
From out his heart, and life from out his sense,
Ere he could drag his body a mile hence."

The cursed wretch, too happy to delay,
Grasping the box of poison, takes his way
To the next street, and buys three flasks of wine.
Two he drugs well against his friends shall dine,
And with a mark secures the harmless one,
To drink at night-time till his work be done;
For all that night he looks to have no sleep,
So well he means to hide his golden heap.
And thus thrice arm'd, and full of murderous glee,
Back to the murderous two returneth he.

What needeth more? for even as their plan
Had shaped his death, right so hath died the man;
And even as the flasks in train were set,
His heirs and scorners fall into his net.

"Ace thrown," quoth one, smiling a smile full grim;
"Now for his wine, and then we'll bury him."

And seizing the two flasks, each held his breath
With eyes to heav'n, and deep he drank his death.

CAMBUS KHAN.*

A FRAGMENT.

A stranger brings to the King of Tartary, while he is feasting, certain wonderful presents, among which is a brazen horse, which the monarch rides.

At Sarra, in the land of Tartary,
There dwelt a king, and with the Russ warr'd he,
Through which there perish'd many a doughty man;
And Cambus was he call'd, the noble Khan.
Nowhere, in all that region, had a crown
Been ever worn with such entire renown.

* This, in the original, is the story that Milton so admired.

> Call up him that left half told
> The story of Cambuscan bold,
> Of Camball and of Algarsife,
> And who had Canace to wife,
> That own'd the virtuous ring and glass;
> And of the wonderous horse of brass,
> On which the Tartar king did ride.

It is strange that Milton should have pronounced the word *Cambùscan;* nor is it pleasant, when his robust line must be resounding in the ear of every one to whom the story is called to mind, to be forced to obey even the greater dictation of the original, and throw the accent, as undoubtedly it ought to be thrown, on the first and last syllable. On no theory, as respects Chaucer's versification, does it appear intelligible how Milton could have thrown the accent on the second syllable, when the other reading stares us in the face throughout Chaucer's poem.

Hardy he was, and true, and rich, and wise,
Always the same; serene of soul and eyes;
Piteous and just, benign and honourable,
Of his brave heart as any centre stable;
And therewithal he ever kept a state
So fit to uphold a throne so fortunate,
That there was nowhere such another man.

This noble king, this Tartar, Cambus Khan,*
Had by the late Queen Elfeta, his wife,
Two sons, named Cambalu and Algarsife,
And a dear daughter, Canace by name,
Whose perfect beauty puts my pen to shame.
If you could see my heart, it were a glass
To show perhaps how fair a thing she was;
But when I speak of her, my tongue appears
To fail me, looking in that face of hers.
'Tis well for me that I regard not those,
Who love what I do, as my natural foes;
Or when I think how dear she is to be
To one that will adorn this history,
And how her heart will love him in return,
My paper, sooner than be touch'd, should burn:

* This commencement of a fresh paragraph with the second line of a couplet, a beauty noticed in our prefatory observations, is retained, together with the couplet itself, from the original.

But she knows nothing of all this at present,
She's only young, and innocent, and pleasant;
And sometimes by her father sits and sighs,
On which he stoops to kiss her gentle-lidded eyes.

And so befel, that when this Khan supreme
Had twenty winters borne his diadem,
He bade the feast of his nativity
Be cried through Sarra, as 'twas wont to be.
It was in March; and the young lusty year
Came in with such a flood of golden cheer,
That the quick birds, against the sunny sheen,
What for the season and the thickening green,
Sung their affections loudly o'er the fields:
They seem'd to feel that they had got them shields
Against the sword of winter, keen and cold.

High is the feast in Sarra, that they hold;
And Cambus, with his royal vestments on,
Sits at a separate table on a throne;
His sons a little lower on the right;
His daughter on the left, a gentle sight;
And then his peers, apart from either wall,
Ranged in majestic drapery down the hall.
The galleries on two sides have crowded slants
Full as flow'r-shows, of ladies and gallants;

And o'er the doorway, opposite the king,
The proud musicians blow their shawms and sing.

But to relate the whole of the array
Would keep me from my tale a summer's day;
And so I pass the service and the cost
The often-silenced noise, the lofty toast,
And the glad symphonies that leap'd to thank
The lustre-giving Lord, whene'er he drank.
Suffice to say, that after the third course,
His vassals, while the sprightly wine's in force,
And the proud music mingles over all,
Bring forth their gifts, and set them in the hall;
And so befel, that when the last was set,
And while the king sat thus in his estate,
Hearing his minstrels playing from on high
Before him at his board deliciously,
All on a sudden, ere he was aware,
Through the hall door, and the mute wonder there,
There came a stranger on a steed of brass,
And in his hand he held a looking-glass;
Some sparkling ring he wore; and by his side,
Without a sheath, a cutting sword was tied;
And up he rides unto the royal board:
In all the hall there was not spoke a word:

All wait with busy looks, both young and old,
To hear what wonderous thing they shall be told.

The stranger, who appear'd a noble page,
High-bred, and of some twenty years of age,
Dismounted from his horse; and kneeling down,
Bow'd low before the face that wore the crown;
Then rose, and reverenc'd lady, lords, and all,
In order as they sat within the hall,
With such observance, both in speech and air,
That certainly, had Kubla's self been there,*
Or sage Confucius, with his courtesy,
Return'd to earth to show what men should be,
He could not have improv'd a single thing:
Then turning lastly to address the king,
Once more, but lightlier than at first, he bow'd,
And in a manly voice thus spoke aloud:—

"May the great Cambus to his slave be kind!
My lord, the King of Araby and Ind,
In honour of your feast, this solemn day,
Salutes you in the manner he best may,
And sends you, by a page whom he holds dear,
(His happy but his humble messenger)
This steed of brass; which, in a day and night,
Through the dark half as safely as the light,

* The great Chinese Emperor of the Tartar dynasty.

O'er sea and land, and with your perfect ease,
Can bear your body wheresoe'er you please.
It matters not if skies be foul or fair;
The thing is like a thought, and cuts the air
So smoothly, and so well observes the track,
The man that will may sleep upon his back.
All that the rider needs, when he would turn,
Or rise, or take him downwards, you may learn,
If it so please you, when we speak within,
And does but take the writhing of a pin.

"This glass too, which I hold, such is its power,
That if by any chance, an evil hour
Befel your empire or yourself, 'twould show
What men you ought to know of, friend or foe;
And more than this, if any lady's heart
Be set on one that plays her an ill part,
Or is in aught beneath her love and her,
Here she may see his real character,
All his new loves, and all his old pursuits:
His heart shall all be shown her, to the roots.

"Therefore, my lord, with your good leave, this glass,
And this green ring, the greenest ever was,

My master, with his greeting, hopes may be
Your excellent daughter's here, my lady Canace.

"The virtues of the ring, my lord, are these—
That if a lady loves the flowers and trees,
And birds, and all fair Nature's ministers,
And if she bear this gem within her purse,
Or on her hand, like any other ring,
There's not a fowl that goes upon the wing,
But she shall understand his speech or strain,
And in his own tongue answer him again.
All plants that gardens or that fields produce,
She shall be also skill'd in, and their use,
Whether for sweetness or for staunching wounds:
No secret shall she miss, that smiles in balmy grounds.

"Lastly, my lord, this sword has such a might,
That let it meet the veriest fiend in fight,
'Twill carve throughout his armour the first stroke,
Were it as thick as any branched oak;
Nor could the wound be better for the care
Of all the hands and skills that ever were;
And yet, should it so please you, of your grace,
To pass the flat side on the wounded place,
Though it were ready to let out his soul,
The flesh should close again, the man be whole.

"Oh heart of hearts! that nobody shall break!
Pardon me, sir, that thus my leave I take
E'en of a sword, and like a lover grieve,
But its own self, unbidden, will not leave
The hand that wields it, though it smote a block
The dullest in the land, or dash'd a rock:
And this my master hopes may also be
Acceptable to Tartary's majesty,
With favour for himself, and pardon, sir, for me."

The Khan, who listen'd with a gracious eye,
Smil'd as he stopp'd, and made a due reply,
Thanking the king, his brother, for the great,
Not gifts, but glories, added to his state,
And saying how it pleas'd him to have known
So young an honour to his neighbour's throne.
The youth then gave the proper officers
The gifts; who, 'midst the music's bursting airs,
Laid them before the king and Canace,
There as they sate, each in their high degree:
But nothing that they did could move the horse;
Boys might as well have tried their little force
Upon a giant with his armour on:
The brazen thing stood still as any stone.
The stranger hasten'd to relieve their doubt,
And touch'd his neck, and led him softly out;

And 'twas a wonder and a joy to see
How well he went, he stept so tenderly.

Great was the press that from all quarters came
To gaze upon this horse of sudden fame;
And many were the struggles to get close,
And touch the mane to try if it hung loose,
Or pat it on the shining flanks, or feel
The muscles in the neck that sternly swell;
But the Khan's officers forbade, and fear
E'en of the horse conspir'd to keep the circle clear.

High was the creature built, both broad and long,
And with a true proportion to be strong;
And yet so "horsely" and so quick of eye,
As if it were a steed of Araby;
So that from tail to ear there was no part
Nature herself could better, much less art;
Only the people dreaded to perceive
How cold it was, although it seem'd alive;
And on all sides the constant wonder was
How it could move, and yet was plainly brass.

Of magic some discours'd, and some of powers
By planets countenanced in kindly hours,

Through which wise men had compass'd mighty
things
Of natural wit to please illustrious kings;
And some fell talking of the iron chain
That fell from heaven in old king Argun's reign;* •
And then they spoke of visions in the air,
And how this creature might have been born there;
Of white lights heard at work, and fiery fights
Seen in the north on coldest winter nights,
And pale traditions of Pre-Adamites.

Much did the talk run also on the sword,
That harm'd and heal'd, fit gift for sovereign lord.
One said that he had heard, or read somewhere,
Of a great southern king with such a spear;
A chief, who had for mother a sea-fairy,
And slew a terror called the Sagittary.†
As to the glass, some thought the secret lay
In what geometers and others say
Of angles and reflections, as a pond
Shows not its sides alone, but things beyond;
Iskander set one, like a sleepless eye,
O'er a sea-town, far seen, and studied nigh,

* Rather, I presume, the iron (an aerolite) of which the chain was made.

† This is the Centaur in the "Tale of Troy," as told by the middle ages. The "chief" was Achilles.

In which the merchant read of storms to come,
Or hail'd his sunny ships blown softly home.*
But most the ring was talk'd of: every one
Quoting that other ring of Solomon,
Which, wheresoe'er it married, brought a dower
Of wisdom, and upon the hand put power.
A knowledge of the speech of birds was known
To be a gift especially its own,
Which made them certain that this ring of green
Was part of it, perhaps a sort of skin
Shed for some reason as a serpent's is;
And here their reasoning was not much amiss.
The wiser sort ponder'd and doubted; folly
Determin'd everything, or swallow'd wholly;
The close and cunning, foolishest of all,
Fear'd that the whole was diabolical,
And wish'd the stranger might not prove a knave
Come to find out what liberal monarchs gave,
And ruin with his very dangerous horses
People's eternal safety, and their purses.
For what it puzzles vice to comprehend,
It gladly construes to the baser end.

Some wits there were began at last to doubt
Whether the horse could really move about,

* The lighthouse at Alexandria, supposed, in the east, to be the work (thus fabulized) of Alexander the Great.

And on their fingers' ends were arguing,
When lo! their subject vanish'd from the ring;
Vanish'd like lightning; an impatient beast!
But, hark! I hear them rising from the feast.

The dinner done, Cambus arose; and all
Stood up, prepar'd to follow from the hall:
On either side they bend beneath his eye:
"Before him goeth the loud minstrelsy;"
And thus they pace into a noble room,
Where dance and song were waiting till they come
With throng of waxen lights that shed a thin perfume.
But first the king and his young visitor
Go where the horse was put, and close the door;
And there the Khan learns all about the pin,
And how the horse is hasten'd or held in,
And turn'd, and made to rise or to descend,
And all by a mere thumb and finger's end.
The stranger further tells him of a word,
By which the horse, the instant it is heard,
Vanishes with his sparkling shape, like light,
And comes again, whether it be day or night.
"And, sir," said he, "my master bade me say
The first time I was honour'd in this way,

(For on the throne you might prefer, he said,
To wave such plain confessions from crown'd head)
That one like you were fitter far than he
To ride the elements like a deity,
And with a speed proportion'd to your will
Shine on the good, and fall upon the ill;
For he, too sensual and too satisfied
With what small good lay near him, like bride,
Was ever but a common king; but you
A king, and a reforming conqueror, too."*

Glad is great Cambus, both at this discourse,
And to be master of so strange a horse,
And longs to mount at once, and go and see
His highest mountain tops in Tartary,
Or look upon the Caspian, or appear
Suddenly in Cathay, a starry fear.
And any other time he would have gone,
So much he long'd to put his pinions on,
But on his birth-day 'twas not to be done;
And so they have return'd, and join'd the guests,
Who wait the finish of this feast of feasts.

* In making these additions to the original, the author had an eye to that continuation of the story, which he has mentioned.

But how shall I describe the high delight,
And all the joys that danced into the night?
Imagine all that should conclude a feast
Giv'n by a mighty prince, and in the east,
And all was here, from song to supper stand,
As though it had arisen from fairy-land.
The feast before it was a thing of state;
But this the flowery top, and finish delicate.
Here were the cushion'd sofas, the perfumes,
The heavenly mirrors making endless rooms;
The last quintessences of drinks; the trays
Of colour'd relishes dress'd a thousand ways;
The dancing girls, that bending here and there,
With asking beauty lay along the air;
And lighter instruments, guitars and lutes,
Sprinkling their graces on the streaming flutes;
And all the sounds, and all the sweets of show,
Feeling victorious while the harpings go.
Not all the lords were there, only the best
And greatest, all in change of garments drest;
And with them were the wives they thought the loveliest.
You must not judge our Tartars by the tales
Of nations merely eastern, and serails:
The eastern manners were in due degree,
But mix'd and rais'd with northern liberty;

And women came with their impetuous lords,
To pitch the talk and humanize the boards,
And shed a gentle pleasure in the place,—
The smooth alternate with the bearded face;
As airs in spring come soft among the trees,
And what was bluster turn to whispering ease.

Our young ambassador convers'd with all,
But still attendant on the sovereign's call,
Who, like the rest, whatever the discourse,
Was sure to turn it to the gifts and horse;
Till, to the terror of some lovers, word
Was giv'n to fetch the mirror and the sword;
The ring, meanwhile, being handed round, and tried
Upon fair fingers with a fluttering pride.
Some long'd to have the birds awake, and some
Were glad enough the tattling things were dumb.
"Great heav'n!" thought one, and seem'd to faint away,
"What (ah! my Khojah!) would the parrot say?"
"And what," conceiv'd another, "would the jay?
"I've often thought the wretch was going to speak,
"He trolls the shocking words so in his beak:
"I'm sure the very first would make me shriek."
Cambus, as sage as he was valiant, thought
There was no need to have the creatures brought;

Nor, when the mirror came, would he permit
That any but himself should read in it;
For which, as he perceiv'd, but mention'd not,
Full thirty ladies lov'd him on the spot.
As to the sword, he thought it best to try
So masculine a thing in open sky;
Which made him also chuse to take a course
Over the towers of Sarra on his horse.
So issuing forth, he led into the air,
Saluting the sweet moon which met him there,
And forth the steed was brought; you would have said,
It knew for what, so easily 'twas led,
And leant with such an air its lively head.
But when at rest, still as before it stood,
As though its legs had to the ground been glued.
Some urged it on, some dragg'd, and some would fain
Have made it lift a foot, but all in vain.
And yet when Cambus whisper'd it, a thrill
Flash'd through its limbs, nor could its feet be still,
But rock'd the body with a sprightly grace,
As though it yearn'd aloft, and weigh'd it for the race.

The youth had talk'd of armour like an oak,
And how the sword would joint it with a stroke.

The Khan had no convenient foe at hand,
To see what sort of carving he could stand,
But in the moon there stood some oaken trees,
And suddenly, he struck at one of these:
Back, like a giant, fell its towering size,
And let the light on his victorious eyes.
The blow was clearly the sword's own, and yet
The Khan, as if inspir'd, felt proud of it,
And leaping on the horse as suddenly,
He touch'd the pin, and bade the fair good bye,
And 'midst their pretty shrieks, went mounting
to the sky.

Cambus ascended such a height so soon,
It seem'd as if he meant to reach the moon;
And you might know by a tremendous shout,
That not a soul in Sarra but look'd out;
But the fierce noise made some of them afraid,
That it might startle e'en a brazen head,
And threat'ning looks were turn'd upon the
youth,
Who glow'd and said, "By all the faith and truth
That is, or can be, in the heart of man,
Nothing can happen to the noble Khan:
See, he returns!" And at the word, indeed,
They saw returning the descending steed;

Not round and round, careering; but at once;
Oblique and to the point, a fervid pounce.
For to say truth, the noble Khan himself,
Though he had fought on many a mountain shelf,
And droop'd through deserts, and been drench'd in seas,
Felt somewhat strange in that great emptiness,
And was not sorry to relieve his court,
By cutting his return some fathom short:
Such awful looks has utter novelty
To dash and to confuse the boldest eye.

The Khan return'd, they hasten all again
To their warm room, but do not long remain:
For late, and long, and highly-wrought delight
Cannot, at will, resume its giddy height;
And so, his story told, and praises spread
From mouth to mouth, he waved his court to bed;
Yet still in bed, and dozing oft between,
Their fading words recall'd what they had seen:
Still of the ring they mumbled, and the glass,
And what amazing things might come to pass:
And when they slept (for suppers produce dreams,
And join'd with dinners, mount them to extremes)

A hundred vapour-headed souls that night
Went riding their own brass with all their might:
They skim, they dive, they shoot about, they soar,
They say,—"Why rode I not this way before?
Strange! not to think of such a perfect goer!
What leg that crosses brass would stoop to horse-flesh more?"*

Ay: such, quoth the wise wit, is human life:
We dream of mirth, and wake, and find one's wife!
Nay, quoth the wiser wit, the best way then
Is to wake little, and to sleep again.
Wake much, if life go right: if it go wrong,
Learn how to dream with Chaucer all day long:
Or learn still better, if you can, to make
Your world at all times, sleeping or awake;
The true receipt, whether by days or nights,
To charm your griefs, and double your delights.

Fancy and Fact differ in this alone;
One strikes our spirit, and our substance one;

* It is hoped that this quadruple rhyme, the first ever ventured in the heroic measure, will be pardoned under the "go" of the circumstances.

But both alike can bring into our eyes
The tears, and make a thousand feelings rise
Of smarting wrongs, or pleasant sympathies.

But sleep thou too, my pen. At morn we'll tell
What sweet and sad new knowledge there befel
The lady of the ring within a warbling dell.

TRANSLATIONS.

THE INFANT HERCULES AND THE SERPENTS.

FROM THEOCRITUS.

JUNO, jealous of the child which Jupiter has had by Alcmena, sends two dreadful serpents to devour the boy. The serpents come upon him, while he and his half-brother Iphiclus, the son of Amphitryon, are sleeping together. Iphiclus, the child of the mortal father, is terrified: Hercules, the infant demi-god, seizes and destroys them, as if they were living play-things. His mother consults the prophet Tiresias on the occasion, and is told of her son's future renown.

YOUNG Hercules had now beheld the light
Only ten months, when once upon a night,
Alcmena, having wash'd, and given the breast
To both her heavy boys, laid them to rest.
Their cradle was a noble shield of brass,
Won by her lord from slaughtered Pterelas.
Gently she laid them down, and gently laid
Her hand on both their heads, and yearn'd, and said,
"Sleep, sleep, my boys, a light and pleasant sleep;
My little souls, my twins, my guard and keep!

Sleep happy, and wake happy!" And she kept
Rocking the mighty buckler, and they slept.

At midnight, when the Bear went down, and broad
Orion's shoulder lit the starry road,
There came, careering through the opening halls,
On livid spires, two dreadful animals—
Serpents; whom Juno, threatening as she drove,
Had sent there to devour the boy of Jove.
Orbing their blood-fed bellies in and out,
They tower'd along; and as they look'd about,
An evil fire out of their eyes came lamping;
A heavy poison dropt about their champing.

And now they have arriv'd, and think to fall
To their dread meal, when lo! (for Jove sees all)
The house is lit, as with the morning's break,
And the dear children of Alcmena wake.
The younger one, as soon as he beheld
The evil creatures coming on the shield,
And saw their loathsome teeth, began to cry
And shriek, and kick away the clothes, and try
All his poor little instincts of escape;
The other, grappling, seized them by the nape
Of either poisonous neck, for all their twists,
And held, like iron, in his little fists.

Buckled and bound he held them, struggling wild;
And so they wound about the boy, the child,
The long-begetting boy, the suckling dear,
That never teaz'd his nurses with a tear.

Tir'd out at length, they trail their spires and gasp,
Lock'd in that young indissoluble grasp.

Alcmena heard the noise, and "Wake," she cried,
"Amphitryon, wake; for terror holds me tied!
Up; stay not for the sandals: hark! the child,
The youngest—how he shrieks! The babe is wild:
And see, the walls and windows! 'Tis as light
As if 'twere day, and yet 'tis surely night.
There's something dreadful in the house; there is
Indeed, dear husband!" He arose at this;
And seiz'd his noble sword, which overhead
Was always hanging at the cedar-bed:
The hilt he grasp'd in one hand, and the sheath
In t'other; and drew forth the blade of death.

All in an instant, like a stroke of doom,
Returning midnight smote upon the room.

Amphitryon call'd; and woke from heavy sleep
His household, who lay breathing hard and deep;

"Bring lights here from the hearth! lights, lights; and guard
The doorways; rise, ye ready labourers hard!"

He said; and lights came pouring in, and all
The busy house was up, in bower and hall;
But when they saw the little suckler, how
He grasp'd the monsters, and with earnest brow
Kept beating them together, plaything-wise,
They shriek'd aloud; but he with laughing eyes,
Soon as he saw Amphitryon, leap'd and sprung
Childlike, and at his feet the dead disturbers flung.

Then did Alcmena to her bosom take
Her feebler boy, who could not cease to shake.
The other son Amphitryon took and laid
Beneath a fleece; and so return'd to bed.

Soon as the cock, with his thrice-echoing cheer,
Told that the gladness of the day was near,
Alcmena sent for old, truth-uttering
Tiresias; and she told him all this thing,
And bade him say what she might think and do;
"Nor do thou fear," said she, "to let me know,
Although the mighty gods should meditate
Aught ill; for man can never fly from Fate.

And thus thou seest" (and here her smiling eyes
Look'd through a blush) "how well I teach the wise,"

So spoke the queen. Then he, with glad old tone;
"Be of good heart, thou blessed bearing one,
True blood of Perseus; for by my sweet sight,
Which once divided these poor lids with light,
Many Greek women, as they sit and weave
The gentle thread across their knees at eve,
Shall sing of thee and thy beloved name;
Thou shalt be blest by every Argive dame:
For unto this thy son it shall be given,
With his broad heart to win his way to heaven;
Twelve labours shall he work; and all accurst
And brutal things o'erthrow, brute men the worst;
And in Trachinia shall the funeral pyre
Purge his mortalities away with fire;
And he shall mount amid the stars, and be
Acknowledg'd kin to those who envied thee,
And sent these den-born shapes to crush his
destiny."

PAULO AND FRANCESCA.

FROM DANTE.

IN THE TRIPLE RHYME OF THE ORIGINAL.

In the fifth circle of his imaginary Hell, (through which he is conducted by the spirit of Virgil,) Dante sees the souls of Paris and Helen, of Semiramis, Cleopatra, Tristan, and other personages, real and fabulous, who had given way to carnal passions. Among them he observes those of two lovers, whose tragical end had afflicted the house of his friend and patron, Guido Novello da Polenta, Lord of Ravenna. He asks permission to speak with them; and out of excess of pity at the recital of their story, falls like a man struck dead.

This is the beautiful and affecting passage in Dante, on which the author of the present volume, when a young man, ventured to found the *Story of Rimini*. He introduces it in the volume for the purpose of enriching his *Stories in Verse*, for even a translation cannot hinder it from doing that. Stories are told in many ways in going from mouth to mouth; and the reader will be good enough to consider the *Story of Rimini* as a *detail of the particulars of a domestic event*, given by a young man out of the interest which he has taken in what he has heard, but with no thought of competing in point of effect, or in any other point, with the wonderful summary, in the shape of which he first heard it.

To recur to an illustration of another sort, he will add, from his *Autobiography*, that the "design" of his poem is "altogether different in its pretensions." It is "a picture, by an immature hand, of sunny luxuriance overclouded; not of a cloud, nó less

brief than beautiful, crossing the gulfs of Tartarus. Those who, after having seen lightning, will tolerate no other effect of light, have a right to say so, and may have the highest critical reason on their side; but those who will do otherwise have perhaps more; for they can enjoy lightning, and a bask in the sunshine too."

SCARCE had I learnt the names of all that press
Of knights and dames, than I beheld a sight
Nigh reft my wits for very tenderness.

"O guide!" I said, "fain would I, if I might,
Have speech with yonder pair, that hand in hand
Seem borne before the dreadful wind so light."

"Wait," said my guide, "until thou seest their band
Sweep round. Then beg them, by that love, to stay;
And they will come, and hover where we stand."

Anon the whirlwind flung them round that way;
And then I cried, "Oh, if I ask nought ill,
Poor weary souls, have speech with me, I pray."

As doves, that leave some bevy circling still,
Set firm their open wings, and through the air
Sweep homewards, wafted by their pure good will;

So broke from Dido's flock that gentle pair,
Cleaving, to where we stood, the air malign;
Such strength to bring them had a loving prayer.

The female spoke. "O living soul benign!"
She said, "thus, in this lost air, visiting
Us, who with blood stain'd the sweet earth divine;

"Had we a friend in heaven's eternal King,
We would beseech him keep thy conscience clear,
Since to our anguish thou dost pity bring.

"Of what it pleaseth thee to speak and hear,
To that we also, till this lull be o'er
That falleth now, will speak and will give ear.

"The place where I was born is on the shore,
Where Po brings all his rivers to depart
In peace, and fuse them with the ocean floor.

"Love, that soon kindleth in a gentle heart,
Seiz'd him thou look'st on for the form and face,
Whose end still haunts me like a rankling dart.

"Love, which by love will be denied no grace,
Gave me a transport in my turn so true,
That lo! 'tis with me, even in this place.

"Love brought us to one grave. The hand that slew,
Is doom'd to mourn us in the pit of Cain."
Such were the words that told me of those two.

Downcast I stood, looking so full of pain
To think how hard and sad a case it was,
That my guide ask'd what held me in that vein.

His voice arous'd me; and I said, "Alas!
All their sweet thoughts then, all the steps that led
To love, but brought them to this dolorous pass."

Then turning my sad eyes to theirs, I said,
"Francesca, see—these human cheeks are wet—
Truer and sadder tears were never shed.

"But tell me. At the time when sighs were sweet,
What made thee strive no longer?—hurried thee
To the last step where bliss and sorrow meet?"

"There is no greater sorrow," answer'd she,
"And this thy teacher here knoweth full well,
Than calling to mind joy in misery.

"But since thy wish be great to hear us tell
How we lost all but love, tell it I will,
As well as tears will let me. It befel,

"One day, we read how Lancelot gazed his fill
At her he lov'd, and what his lady said.
We were alone, thinking of nothing ill.

"Oft were our eyes suspended as we read,
And in our cheeks the colour went and came;
Yet one sole passage struck resistance dead.

"'Twas where the lover, moth-like in his flame,
Drawn by her sweet smile, kiss'd it. O then, he
Whose lot and mine are now for aye the same,

"All in a tremble, on the mouth kiss'd *me*.
The book did all. Our hearts within us burn'd
Through that alone. That day no more read we."

While thus one spoke, the other spirit mourn'd
With wail so woful, that at his remorse
I felt as though I should have died. I turn'd

Stone-stiff; and to the ground, fell like a corse.

UGOLINO AND HIS CHILDREN.

FROM THE SAME.

In the ninth, or frozen circle, of his Hell, Dante is shown the embodied spirits of traitors. Among them is Count Ugolino, who betrayed Pisa to the Florentines, horribly feeding on the skull of Archbishop Ruggieri, who was said to have shut up the Count with his four children in a tower, and starved them all to death. Dante interrogates Ugolino, and is told his dreadful story.

Quitting the traitor Bocca's barking soul,*
We saw two more, so iced up in one hole,
That the one's visage capp'd the other's head;
And as a famish'd man devoureth bread,
So rent the top one's teeth the skull below
'Twixt nape and brain. Tydeus, as stories show,
Thus to the brain of Menalippus ate:†—
"O thou!" I cried, "showing such bestial hate

* This traitor, whose hair the furious poet himself has been plucking off by handfuls because he would not disclose his name, barked at every pluck like a dog. The name was disclosed by a fellow-sufferer.

† For giving him his death-wound at the siege of Thebes. But Menalippus's head had been cut off from his earthly body, and was insensible.

To him thou tearest, read us whence it rose;
That, if thy cause be juster than thy foe's,
The world, when I return, knowing the truth,
May of thy story have the greater ruth."

His mouth he lifted from his dreadful fare,
That sinner, wiping it with the grey hair
Whose roots he had laid waste; and thus he said:—
"A desperate thing thou askest; what I dread
Even to think of. Yet, to sow a seed
Of infamy to him on whom I feed,
Tell it I will:—ay, and thine eyes shall see
Mine own weep all the while for misery.
Who thou mayst be, I know not; nor can dream
How thou cam'st hither; but thy tongue doth seem
To show thee, of a surety, Florentine.
Know then, that I was once Count Ugoline,
And this man was Ruggieri, the archpriest.
Still thou mayst wonder at my raging feast;
For though his snares be known, and how his key
He turn'd upon my trust, and murder'd me,
Yet what the murder was, of what strange sort
And cruel, few have had the true report.

Hear then, and judge.—In the tower, called since then
The Tower of Famine, I had lain and seen

Full many a moon fade through the narrow bars,
When, in a dream one night, mine evil stars
Show'd me the future with its dreadful face.
Methought this man led a great lordly chase
Against a wolf and cubs, across the height
Which barreth Lucca from the Pisan's sight.
Lean were the hounds, high-bred, and sharp for blood;
And foremost in the press Gualandi rode,
Lanfranchi, and Sismondi.* Soon were seen
The father and his sons, those wolves I mean,
Limping, and by the hounds all crush'd and torn:
And as the cry awoke me in the morn,
I heard my children, while they dozed in bed
(For they were with me), wail, and ask for bread.
Full cruel, if it move thee not, thou art,
To think what thoughts then rush'd into my heart.
What wouldst thou weep at, weeping not at this?—
All had now waked, and something seem'd amiss,
For 'twas the time they used to bring us bread,
And from our dreams had grown a horrid dread.
I listen'd; and a key, down stairs, I heard
Lock up the dreadful turret. Not a word
I spoke, but look'd my children in the face:
No tear I shed, so firmly did I brace

* Pisan nobles, of the party opposed to that of Ugolino.

My soul; but *they* did; and my Anselm said,
'Father, you look so!—Wont they bring us bread?'
E'en then I wept not, nor did answer word
All day, nor the next night. And now was stirr'd,
Upon the world without, another day;
And of its light there came a little ray,
Which mingled with the gloom of our sad jail;
And looking to my children's bed, full pale,
In four small faces mine own face I saw.
Oh, then both hands for misery did I gnaw;
And they, thinking I did it, being mad
For food, said, 'Father, we should be less sad
If you would feed on us. Children, they say,
Are their own father's flesh. Starve not to-day.'
Thenceforth they saw me shake not, hand nor foot.
That day, and next, we all continued mute.
O thou hard Earth! why opened'st thou not?—
Next day (it was the fourth in our sad lot)
My Gaddo stretch'd him at my feet, and cried,
'Dear father, wont you help me?' and he died.
And surely as thou seest me here undone,
I saw my whole four children, one by one,
Between the fifth day and the sixth, all die.
I became blind; and in my misery
Went groping for them, as I knelt and crawl'd
About the room; and for three days I call'd

Upon their names, as though they could speak too,
Till famine did what grief had fail'd to do."

Having spoke thus, he seiz'd with fiery eyes
That wretch again, his feast and sacrifice,
And fasten'd on the skull, over a groan,
With teeth as strong as mastiff's on a bone.

Ah, Pisa! thou that shame and scandal be
To the sweet land that speaks the tongue of *Sì*,*
Since Florence spareth thy vile neck the yoke,
Would that the very isles would rise, and choke
Thy river, and drown every soul within
Thy loathsome walls. What if this Ugolin
Did play the traitor, and give up (for so
The rumour runs) thy castles to the foe,
Thou hadst no right to put to rack like this
His children. Childhood innocency is.
But that same innocence, and that man's name,
Have damn'd thee, Pisa, to a Theban fame.†

This most affecting of all Dante's stories has been told beautifully (as I have remarked elsewhere) by Chaucer; "but he had not the

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* The Italian for *Yes*. The country is thus designated by the commonest word in its language; as in the case of the French Languedoc, or Language of *Oc*,—the old word in that quarter of France for the same affirmative.

† Alluding to the cruelties practised in the royal house of Thebes.

heart to finish it. He refers for the conclusion to his original, the "grete poete of Itaille;" adding, that Dante will not fail his readers a single word—that is to say, not an atom of the cruelty.

Our great gentle-hearted countryman, who tells Fortune that it was

> "Grete crueltie
> Such birdès for to put in such a cage,"

adds a touch of pathos in the behaviour of one of the children, which Dante does not seem to have thought of:

> "There, day by day, this child began to cry,
> Till in his father's barme (lap) adown he lay;
> And said, 'Farewell, father, I muste die,'
> And *kissed his father*, and died the same day."
>
> *Appendix to the Author's "Stories from the Italian Poets"* (in prose) vol. i. p. 407.

It will be a relief perhaps, to the reader, and would have been a comfort to Chaucer to know, what history has since discovered,—namely, that the story of Ugolino is very doubtful.

MEDORO AND CLORIDANO.

FROM ARIOSTO.

ARIOSTO does not write in the intense manner of Dante. He was a poet of other times and opinions; much inferior to Dante, yet still a great poet of his kind, true to nature, more universal in his sympathies, giving wonderful verisimilitude to the wildest fictions, and full of a charming ease as well as force, though enjoyment sometimes makes him diffuse, and even a little weak and languid. This defect is not unobservable in the episodes before us, as far as style is concerned; though otherwise, and often in the style also, they are full of spirit of the most various kind, both grave and gay.

Medoro and Cloridano, which is a variation of the episode of *Nisus and Euryalus* in Virgil, with beautiful additions, is a story of friendship and gratitude, and shows the poet's hearty belief in those virtues. That of Angelica and Medoro, into which it runs, is a story of love, or rather of girlish passion, and equally shows his truth to the less sentimental impulses of nature, especially where he contrasts his heroine's dotage on the boy with her previous indifference to lovers of a grander sort, who doted on herself. But coquet and mere girl as she was, albeit a queen, this simple reference to a fact in the history and constitution of human nature, has rendered her marriage with the young Moor a favourite with all readers; and the lovely combined names of "Angelica and Medoro" have become almost synonymous with a "true lover's knot."

The circumstances described in these passages take place during the supposed siege of Paris by the Saracens, in the time of Charlemagne. The Saracen and Christian forces are assembled under the city walls, and the former have just sustained a defeat.

ALL night, the Saracens, in their batter'd stations,
Feeling but ill secure, and sore distress'd,
Gave way to tears, and groans, and lamentations,
Only as hush'd as might be, and suppress'd;
Some for the loss of friends and of relations
Left on the field; others for want of rest,
Who had been wounded and were far from home;
But most for dread of what was yet to come.

Among the rest two Moorish youths were there,
Born of a lowly stock in Ptolemais,
Whose story teems with evidence so rare
Of tried affection, it must here find place.
Their names Medoro and Cloridano were.
They had shown Dardinel* the same true face,
Whatever fortune waited on his lance,
And now had cross'd the sea with him to France.

The one, a hunter, used to every sky,
Was of the rougher make, but prompt and fleet:
Medoro had a cheek of rosy dye,
Fair, and delightful for its youth complete:
Of all that came to that great chivalry,
None had a face more lively or more sweet.
Black eyes he had, and sunny curls of hair;
He seem'd an angel, newly from the air.

* One of the Saracen princes who came against Charlemagne.

These two, with others, where the ramparts lay,
Were keeping watch to guard against surprise,
What time the Night, in middle of its way,
Wonders at heaven with its drowsy eyes.
Medoro there, in all he had to say,
Could not but talk, with sadness and with sighs,
Of Dardinel his lord; nay, feel remorse,
Though guiltless, for his yet unburied corse.

"Oh Cloridan," he said, "I try in vain.
To bear the thought; nor ought I, if I could.
Think of a man like that, left on the plain
For wolves and crows! he, too, that was so good
To my poor self! How can he thus remain,
And I stand here, sparing my wretched blood?
Which, for his sake, might twenty times o'erflow,
And yet not pay him half the debt I owe.

"I will go forth,—I will,—and seek him yet,
That he may want not a grave's covering;
And God will grant, perhaps, that I may get
E'en to the sleeping camp of the French king.
Do thou remain; for if my name is set
For death in heav'n, thou mayst relate the thing;
So that if fate cut short the glorious part,
The world may know 'twas not for want of heart."

Struck with amaze was Cloridan to see
Such heart, such love, such duty in a youth;
And labour'd (for he lov'd him tenderly)
To turn a thought so dangerous to them both;
But no—a sorrow of that high degree
Is no such thing to comfort or to soothe.
Medoro was dispos'd, either to die,
Or give his lord a grave wherein to lie.

Seeing that nothing bent him or could move,
Cloridan cried, "My road then shall be thine:—
I too will join in such a work of love;
I too would clasp a death-bed so divine.
Life—pleasure—glory—what would it behove,
Remaining without thee, Medoro mine!
Such death with thee would better far become me,
Than die for grief, shouldst thou be taken from me.'

Thus both resolv'd, they put into their place
The next on guard, and slip from the redoubt.
They cross the ditch, and in a little space
Enter our quarters, looking round about.
So little dream we of a Moorish face,
Our camp is hush'd, and every fire gone out.
'Twixt heaps of arms and carriages they creep,
Up to the very eyes in wine and sleep.

Cloridan stopp'd awhile, and said, "Look here!
Occasions are not things to let go by.
Some of the race who cost our lord so dear,
Surely, Medoro, by this arm must die.
Do thou meanwhile keep watch, all eye and ear,
Lest any one should come:—I'll push on, I,
And lead the way, and make through bed and board
An ample passage for thee with my sword."

He said; and enter'd without more ado
The tent where Alpheus lay, a learned Mars,
Who had but lately come to court, and knew
Physic, and magic, and a world of stars.
This was a cast they had not help'd him to:
Indeed their flatteries had been all a farce;
For he had found, that after a long life
He was to die, poor man, beside his wife:

And now the cautious Saracen has put
His sword, as true as lancet, in his weason.
Four mouths close by are equally well shut,
Before they can find time to ask the reason.
Their names are not in Turpin;* and I cut
Their lives as short, not to be out of season.

* The supposed author of a fabulous history of Charlemagne, to which the Italian narrative poets are always half-ironically referring as their authority.

Next Palidon died, a man of snug resources,
Who made up his bed between two horses.

They then arriv'd, where, pillowing his head
Upon a barrel, lay unhappy Grill.
Much vow'd had he, and much believ'd indeed,
That he, that blessed night, would sleep his fill.
The reckless Moor beheads him on his bed,
And wastes his blood and wine at the same spill:
For he held quarts; and in his dreams that very
Moment had fill'd, but found his glass miscarry.

Near Grill, a German and a Greek there lay,
Andropono and Conrad, who had pass'd
Much of the night *al fresco*, in drink and play;
A single stroke a-piece made it their last.
Happy, if they had thought to play away
Till daylight on their board his eye had cast!
But fate determines all these matters still,
Let us arrange them for her as we will.

Like as a lion in a fold of sheep,
Whom desperate hunger has made gaunt and spare,
Kills, bleeds, devours, and mangles in a heap
The feeble flock collected meekly there;

So the fierce Pagan bleeds us in our sleep,
And lays about, and butchers every where:
And now Medoro joins the dreadful sport,
But scorns to strike among the meaner sort.*

Upon a duke he came, La Brett, who slept
Fast in his lady's arms, embrac'd and fix'd;
So close they were, so fondly had they kept,
That not the air itself could get betwixt.
O'er both their necks at once the falchion swept.
O happy death! O cup too sweetly mix'd!
For as their bosoms and affections were,
E'en so, I trust, their souls went join'd in air.

Ardalic and Malindo next are slain,
Princes whose race the Flemish sceptre wield:
They had been just made knights by Charlemagne,
And had the lilies† added to their shield,
Because, the hardest day of the campaign,
He saw them both turn blood-red in the field.
Lands, too, he said he'd give; and would have done it,
Had not Medoro put his veto on it.

* The slaughter committed by these young friends, especially by Medoro, jars against one's feelings; but it is too true, alas! to nature, in the yet existing condition of society; and Ariosto never baulks a fact of that kind.

† The arms of France.

The wily sword was reaching now the ring
Of the pavilions of the peers,—the fence
Of the more high pavilion of the king.
They were his guard by turns. The Saracens
Here make a halt, and think it fit to bring
Their slaughter to a close, and get them hence;
Since it appears impossible to make
So wide a circuit, and find none awake.

They might have got much booty if they chose,
But now to get clean off is their great good.
Cloridan leads as heretofore, and goes
Picking the safest way out that he could.
At last they come, where, amidst shields and bows,
And swords, and spears, in one great plash of blood,
Lie poor and rich, the monarch and the slave,
And men and horses, heap'd without a grave.

The horrible mixture of the bodies there,
(For all the field was reeking round about)
Would have made vain their melancholy care
Till day-time, which 'twas best to do without,
Had not the Moon, at poor Medoro's prayer,
Put from a darksome cloud her bright horn out.
Medoro to the beam devoutly rais'd
His head, and thus petition'd as he gazed:—

"O holy queen, who by our ancestors
Justly wert worshipp'd by a triple name;
Who show'st in heav'n, and earth, and hell, thy powers
And beauteous face, another and the same;
And who in forests, thy old favourite bowers,
Art the great huntress, following the game;
Show me, I pray thee, where my sovereign lies,
Who while he lived found favour in thine eyes."*

At this, whether 'twas chance or faith, the moon
Parted the cloud, and issued with a stoop,
Fair, as when first she kiss'd Endymion,
And to his arms gave herself naked up.
The city, at that light, burst forth and shone,
And both the camps, and all the plain and slope,
And the two hills that rose on either quarter,
Far from the walls, Montlery and Montmartre.

Most brilliantly of all the lustre shower'd
Where lay the son of great Almontes, dead.
Medoro, weeping, went to his dear lord,
Whom by his shield he knew, of white and red.

* Agreeably to the popular notions of the time in which he wrote, Ariosto makes no distinction, as to appellation, between existing Mahometans and the Pagans of antiquity, and ascribes to the former a particular fancy for the worship of the Triple Goddess.

The bitter tears bathed all his face, and pour'd
From either eye, like founts along their bed.
So sweet his ways, so sweet his sorrows were,
They might have stopt the very winds to hear.

But low he wept, and scarcely audible;
Not that he cared what a surprise might cost,
From any dread of dying; for he still
Felt a contempt for life, and wish'd it lost;
But from the fear, lest ere he could fulfil
His pious business there, it might be crost.
Rais'd on their shoulders is the crownèd load;
And shared between them thus, they take their road.

With the dear weight they make what speed they may,
Like an escaping mother to a birth;
And now comes he, the lord of life and day,
To take the stars from heav'n, the shade from earth;
When the young Scottish prince,* who never lay
Sleeping, when things were to be done of worth,
After continuing the pursuit all night
Came to the field with the first morning light.

And with him came, about him and behind,
A troop of knights, whom they could see from far,

* Zerbino, one of the allies of Charlemagne.

All met upon the road, in the same mind
To search the field for precious spoils of war.
"Brother," said Cloridan, "we must needs, I find,
Lay down our load, and try how fleet we are.
It would be hardly wise to have it said,
We lost two living bodies for a dead."

And off he shook his burden, with that word,
Fancying Medoro would do just the same;
But the poor boy, who better lov'd his lord,
Took on his shoulders all the weight that came.
The other ran, as if with one accord,
Not guessing what had made his fellow lame.
Had he, he would have dared, not merely one,
But heaps of deaths, rather than fled alone.

The knights, who were determin'd that those two
Should either yield them prisoners or die,
Dispers'd themselves, and without more ado
Seiz'd every pass which they might issue by.
The chief himself rode on before, and drew
Nearer and nearer with a steadfast eye;
For seeing them betray such marks of fear,
'Twas plain that in those two no friends were near.

There was an old forest there in those days,
Thick with o'ershadowing trees and underwood,
Which, like a labyrinth, ran into a maze
Of narrow paths, and made a solitude.
The fliers reckoned on its friendly ways,
For giving them close covert while pursued:—
But he that loves these chants of mine in rhyme,
May chuse to hear the rest another time.*

None knows the heart in which he may confide,
As long as he sits high on Fortune's wheel;
For friends of all sorts then are by his side,
Who show him all the self-same face of zeal:
But let the goddess roll him from his pride,
The flattering set are off upon their heel;
And he who lov'd him in his heart alone
Stands firm, and will, even when life is gone.

If eyes could see the heart as well as face,
Many a great man at court who tramples others,
And many an humble one in little grace,
Would change their destiny for one another's;
This would mount up into the highest place—
That go and help the scullions and their mothers.

* The eighteenth canto of the *Orlando Furioso* here terminates, and the nineteenth commences.

But turn we to Medoro, good and true,
Who lov'd his lord, whatever fate could do.

The unhappy youth, now in the thickest way
Of all the wood, would fain have hidden close;
But the dead weight that on his shoulders lay,
Hampers his path, whichever side he goes.
Strange to the country too, he goes astray,
And turns and tramples 'midst the brakes and boughs.
Meanwhile his friend, less burden'd for the race,
Has got in safety to a distant place.

Cloridan came to where he heard no more
The hue and cry that sent him like a dart;
But when he turn'd about and miss'd Medore,
He seem'd to have deserted his own heart.
"Good God!" he cried; "not to see this before!
How could I be so mad? How could I part
With thee, Medoro, and come driving here,
And never dream I left thee, how or where?"

So saying, he returns with bitter sighs
Into the tangled wood, by the same path,
And keeps it narrowly with yearning eyes,
And treads with zeal the track of his own death.
And all the while, horses he hears, and cries,
And threatening voices that take short his breath:

And last of all he hears, and now can see,
Medoro, press'd about with cavalry.

They are a hundred, and all round him. He,
While the chief cries to take him prisoner,
Turns like a wheel, and faces valiantly
All that would seize him, leaping here and there,
Now to an elm, an oak, or other tree,
Nor ever parts he with his burden dear,
See!—he has laid it on the ground at last,
The better to controul and keep it fast.

Like as a bear, whom men in mountains start
In her old stony den, and dare, and goad,
Stands o'er her children with uncertain heart,
And roars for rage and sorrow in one mood:
Anger incites her, and her natural part,
To use her nails, and bathe her lips in blood;
Love melts her, and for all her angry roar,
Holds back her eyes to look on those she bore.

Cloridan knows not how to give his aid,
And yet he must, and die too:—that he knows:
But ere he changes from alive to dead,
He casts about to settle a few foes:
He takes an arrow,—one of his best made,—
And works so well in secret, that it goes

Into a Scotchman's head, right to the brains,
And jerks his lifeless fingers from the reins.

The horsemen in confusion turn about,
To see by what strange hand their fellow died,
When a new shaft's in middle of the rout,
And the man tumbles by his fellow's side.
He was just wondering, and calling out,
And asking questions, fuming as he cried;
The arrow comes, and dashes to his throat,
And cuts him short in middle of his note.

Zerbin, the leader of the troop, could hold
His rage no longer at this new surprise,
But darting on the boy, with eyes that roll'd,
"You shall repent this insolence," he cries;
Then twisting with his hand those locks of gold,
He drags him back, to see him as he dies;
But when he sets his eyes on that sweet face,
He could not do it, 'twas so hard a case.

The youth betook him to his prayers, and said,
"For God's sake, sir, be not so merciless
As to prevent my burying the dead:
'Tis a king's body that's in this distress:
Think not I ask from any other dread;
Life could give me but little happiness.

All the life now which I desire to have,
Is just enough to give my lord a grave.

"If you've a Theban heart, and birds of prey
Must have their food before your rage can cool,
Feast them on me; only do let me lay
His limbs in earth, that has been used to rule."
So spake the young Medoro, in a way
To turn a rock, it was so beautiful.
As for the prince, so deeply was he mov'd,
That all at once he pardon'd and he lov'd.

A ruffian, at this juncture, of the band,
Little restrain'd by what restrain'd the rest,
Thrust with his lance across the suppliant's hand,
And pierc'd his delicate and faithful breast.
The act,—in one too under his command,—
Displeas'd the princely chief, and much distress'd;
The more so, as the poor boy dropp'd his head,
And fell so pale that all believ'd him dead.

Such was his grief, and such was his disdain,
That crying out, "The blood be on his head!"
He turn'd in wrath, to give the thrust again;
But the false villain, ere the words were said,
Put spurs into his horse and fled amain,
Stooping his rascal shoulders, as he fled.

Cloridan, when he sees Medoro fall,
Leaps from the wood, and comes defying all;

And casts away his bow, and almost mad,
Goes slashing round among his enemies,
Rather for death, than any hope he had
Of cutting his revenge to its fit size.
His blood soon colour'd many a dripping blade,
And he perceives with pleasure that he dies;
And so his strength being fairly at an end,
He lets himself fall down beside his friend.

The troop then follow'd where their chief had gone,
Pursuing his stern chase among the trees,
And leave the two companions there alone,
One surely dead, the other scarcely less.
Long time Medoro lay without a groan,
Losing his blood in such large quantities,
That life would surely have gone out at last,
Had not a helping hand been coming past.

ANGELICA AND MEDORO.

THE SEQUEL OF THE PRECEDING STORY.

THERE came by chance a damsel passing there,
Cloak'd like a peasant, to eschew surprise,
But of a royal presence, and so fair,
As well behov'd her keep grave maiden eyes.
'Tis so long since I told you news of her,
Perhaps you know her not in this disguise.
This, you must know then, was Angelica,
Proud daughter of the Khan of great Cathay.

You know the magic ring, and her distress?
Well, when she had recover'd this same ring,
It so increased her pride and haughtiness,
She seem'd too high for any living thing.*
She goes alone, desiring nothing less
Than a companion, even though a king:
She even scorns to recollect the flame
Of one Orlando, or his very name.

But, above all, she hates to recollect
That she had taken to Rinaldo so;†

* The ring conferred the power of invisibility.

† Another of the Peers or Paladins of Charlemagne, second only in renown to Orlando.

She thinks it the last want of self-respect,
Pure degradation, to have look'd so low
"Such arrogance," said Cupid, "must be check'd."
The little God betook him with his bow,
To where Medoro lay, and standing by,
Held the shaft ready with a lurking eye.

Now when the princess saw the youth all pale,
And found him grieving with his bitter wound,
Not for what one so young might well bewail,
But that his king should not be laid in ground,
She felt a something, strange and gentle, steal
Into her heart by some new way it found,
Which touch'd its hardness, and turn'd all to grace;
And more so, when he told her all his case.

And calling to her mind the little arts
Of healing, which she learnt in India,
(For 'twas a study valued in those parts,
Even for those who were in sovereign sway,
And yet so easy, too, that like the heart's,
'Twas more inherited than learnt, they say,)
She cast about, with herbs and balmy juices,
To save so fair a life for all its uses.

And thinking of an herb that caught her eye
As she was coming, in a pleasant plain,

(Whether 'twas panacea, dittany,
Or some such herb accounted sovereign
For staunching blood quickly and tenderly,
And winning out all spasm and bad pain,)
She found it not far off, and gathering some,
Return'd with it to save Medoro's bloom.

In coming back she met upon the way
A shepherd, who was riding through the wood
To find a heifer that had gone astray,
And been two days about the solitude.
She took him with her where Medoro lay,
Now feebler than he was, with loss of blood:
So much he lost, and drew so hard a breath,
That he was now fast fading to his death.

Angelica got off her horse in haste,
And made the shepherd get as fast from his;
She ground the herbs with stones, and then express'd
With her white hands the balmy milkiness,
Then dropp'd it in the wound, and bath'd his breast,
His sides, and spine, and all that was amiss:
And of such virtue was it, that at length
The blood was stopp'd, and he look'd round with strength.

At last he got upon the shepherd's horse,
But would not quit the place till he had seen
Laid in the ground his lord and master's corse;
And Cloridan lay with it, who had been
Smitten so fatally with sweet remorse.
He then obeys the will of the fair queen;
And she, for very pity of his lot,
Goes and stays with him at the shepherd's cot.

Nor would she leave him, she esteem'd him so,
Till she had seen him well with her own eye;
So full of pity did her bosom grow,
Since first she saw him faint and like to die.
Seeing his manners now, and beauty too,
She felt her heart yearn somehow inwardly;
She felt her heart yearn somehow, till at last
'Twas all on fire, and burning warm and fast.

The shepherd's house was good enough, and neat,
A little shady cottage in a dell:
The man had just rebuilt it all complete,
With room to spare, in case more births befel.
There with such knowledge did the lady treat
Her handsome patient, that he soon grew well;
But not before she felt, on her own part,
A secret wound much greater in her heart.

Much greater was the wound, and deeper far,
The invisible arrow made in her heart-strings;
'Twas from Medoro's lovely eyes and hair;
'Twas from the naked archer with the wings.
She feels it now; she feels, and yet can bear
Another's less than her own sufferings.
She thinks not of herself: she thinks alone
How to cure him, by whom she is undone.

The more his wound recovers and gets ease,
Her own grows worse, and widens day by day.
The youth gets well; the lady languishes,
Now warm, now cold, as fitful fevers play.
His beauty heightens like the flowering trees;
She, miserable creature, melts away
Like the weak snow, which some warm sun has found
Fall'n, out of season, on a rising ground.

And must she speak at last, rather than die?
And must she plead without another's aid?
She must, she must; the vital moments fly—
She lives—she dies, a passion-wasted maid.
At length she burst all ties of modesty;
Her tongue explains her eyes; the words are said;
And she asks pity underneath that blow,
Which he perhaps that gave it, did not know.

O Count Orlando! O King Sacripant!*
That fame of yours, say, what avails it ye?
That lofty honour, those great deeds ye vaunt,
Say, what's their value with the lovely she?
Show me—recal to memory, (for I can't,)
Show me, I beg, one single courtesy
That ever she vouchsafed ye, far or near,
For all ye've done and have endured for her.

And you, if you could come to life again,
O Agrican, how hard 'twould seem to you,
Whose love was met by nothing but disdain,
And vile repulses, shocking to go through!†
O Ferragus! O thousands, who in vain
Did all that loving and great hearts could do,
How would ye feel to see, with all her charms,
This thankless creature in a stripling's arms!

The young Medoro had the gathering
Of the first kiss on lips untouch'd before,

* Sacripant was king of Circassia.

† The courtship of Angelica by Agrican, King of Tartary, with a countless army behind him to enforce it, attracted the notice of Milton.

> "Such forces met not, nor so wide a camp,
> When Agrican, with all his northern powers,
> Besieged Albracca, as romances tell,
> The city of Gallaphrone, from whence to win
> The fairest of her sex, Angelica."
>
> *Paradise Regained.*

For never since her beauty blush'd with spring,
Had passion's self dared aught except adore.
To render the fond step an honest thing,
The priest was call'd to read the service o'er,
(For without marriage what can come but strife?)*
And the bride-mother was the shepherd's wife.

All was perform'd, in short, that could be so
In such a place, to make the nuptials good;
Nor did the happy pair think fit to go,
But spent the month and more within the wood.
The lady to the stripling seem'd to grow;
His step her step, his eyes her eyes pursued;
Nor did her love lose any of its zest,
Though she was always hanging on his breast.

In doors and out of doors, by night, by day,
She had the charmer by her side for ever:
Morning and evening they would stroll away,
Now by some field, or little tufted river;
They chose a cave in middle of the day,
Perhaps not less agreeable or clever
Than Dido and Æneas found to screen them,
When storm and tempest would have rush'd between them.

* A banter on the most bantered of all subjects.

And all this while there was not a smooth tree,
That drew from stream or fount its gentle pith,
Nor stone less hard than stones are apt to be,
But they would find a knife to carve it with.
And in a thousand places you might see,
And on the walls about you and beneath,
ANGELICA AND MEDORO, tied in one,
As many ways as lover's knots could run.

And when they thought they had outspent their time,
Angelica the royal took her way,
She and Medoro, to the Indian clime,
To crown him king of her fair realm, Cathay.

LAZY CORNER;

OR,

BED VERSUS BUSINESS.

FRANCESCO BERNI, one of the most popular wits and poets of Italy, flourished in the fifteenth century at the courts of Clement the Seventh and Alessandro de Medici. A tragical story used to be told of his having been poisoned by Alessandro, for refusing to administer a like death to the poisoner's brother; but nobody now believes it. Berni was related to Cardinal Bibbiena, who wrote one of the earliest Italian comedies; but the cardinal, in spite of his comedy and his kinsmanship, did nothing for him; and he got as little from his eminence's nephew, his heir; he therefore entered the service of the pope's datary, which he ultimately quitted to reside on a small canonry he possessed at Florence; where he died, after a life of ease and good-fellowship, varied with serious as well as lively studies.

Berni was a real poet, grave as well as gay; but unfortunately he was thrown on one of the corruptest ages of Italy, and condescended to write many things unworthy of the finer parts of his genius, to amuse a dissolute nobility. He wrote such pure, unaffected Tuscan, and his manner in his lighter pieces was so exquisitely *naïve*, full of those unexpected turns in which carelessness and significance meet, that although Pulci began it, and Marot and La Fontaine excelled in it in France, it was called after his name among his countrymen, by whom it is still known as the "Bernesque" style. It had many followers who became celebrated, such

as Casa, Molza, Firenzuola, Mauro, and others, most of them friends of his, and members of a club called Vine-Dressers' (*Vignaiuoli*), who each took the name of something in connexion with wine-making. They probably composed (next to our Elizabethan club at the "Mermaid,") the most brilliant assemblage of wits that Europe has seen, not excepting those of Charles the Second's time, or the coteries of the Chaulieus and Chapelles. Voltaire profited greatly by this style; and nobody needs to be reminded what lustre it has received from the pen of Lord Byron.

But the greatest and best work of Berni, after all, was his modernization of Boiardo's beautiful old poem, the *Orlando Innamorato*, in which he exhibited a genius of the most solid description. Indeed, it is a production unique in the history of letters, having contested the palm of superiority with its original. The stanzas here attempted in English, form part of the sixty-seventh canto of this work. Berni inserted them in the account of a *Fairy Palace*, in which the fine old poet had brought his knights together to lead a luxurious life of dancing and love-making. The remodeller introduces himself as a "certain Florentine," living in the same age, and brought here for the same purpose of doing as he pleased (for that was the order of the house); only his pleasure was, not to dance, or trouble himself with action of any kind, but to lie in bed and do nothing, his brain and all his other faculties, having, he says, been worn out by eternal writing and correspondence, as secretary to the aforesaid pope's datary, a prelate whose office it was to date the papal bulls, and to do a world of chancery business besides. Berni was a man unfit for business of any kind, except to write poetry and enjoy himself; and accordingly he here gives a ludicrous account of his official toils, and of the luxurious revenge he took of them out of the very prostration of his powers. Some dull biographers have taken the caricature for a history of his actual way of life; whereas, though it is not to be doubted that he could be lazy enough when he chose, he must have been anything but a sluggard in ordinary, his company having been in the greatest

request during the sprightliest period of Italian wit, besides his having been a visitor of divers cities, and re-written the whole of Boiardo's poem, which is a long one.

It has been supposed, and I cannot help thinking justly, that Thomson owed the idea of his charming *Castle of Indolence* to this fancy of Berni's. Mr. Stewart Rose, in his abstract of the new *Orlando Innamorato* (p. xliv.), doubts whether the author of the *Seasons* was sufficiently conversant with Italian poetry; but surely, whether he was conversant with it or not (and the probability, I should think, was the other way), he who had been intimate with so many scholars of all kinds, and who had also travelled in Italy himself, and could have required nothing but a hint for a fiction so congenial, might, or rather must, have heard of Berni often enough for such a result.

Thomson, a notorious lier in bed, was fifteen years writing his *Castle of Indolence;* and he is said to have been seen in his garden at Richmond eating a peach off a tree with his hands in his waistcoat pockets. I doubt if the big, but not corpulent Berni ever went so far on the wrong side of activity as that.

Among the rest a Florentine there came,
A boon companion, of a gentle kin.
I say a Florentine, although the name
Had taken root some time in Casentin,
Where his good father wedded a fair dame,
And pitch'd his tent. The place he married in
Was call'd Bibbiena, as it is at present;
A spot upon the Arno, very pleasant.

Nigh to this place was Lamporecchio (scene
Of great Masetto's gardening recreations);

There was our hero born;—then, till nineteen,
Bred up in Florence, not on the best rations;
Then, it pleas'd God, settled at Rome; I mean,
Drawn there by hopes from one of his relations;
Who, though a cardinal, and Pope's right arm,
Did the poor devil neither good nor harm.*

This great man's heir vouchsafed him then his grace,
With whom he fared as he was wont to fare;
Whence, finding himself still in sorry case,
He thought he might as well look out elsewhere;
So hearing people wish they had a place
With the good Datary of St. Peter's chair,
A thing they talk'd of with a perfect unction—
Place get he did in that enchanting function.

* This was the Cardinal Bibbiena aforesaid, who had been tutor to Léo X., and possessed great influence. He seems to have been fond of complimenting the disinterestedness of his friends by doing nothing for them. He was very intimate with Ariosto, and therefore did nothing for *him;* as the great poet himself has intimated in his *Satires.* Nay, when Leo issued his Bull, securing the property of the *Orlando Furioso* to its author, "Dear Bibbiena," says Ariosto, "expedited the matter for me—at my own expense."

"Il mio Bibbiena
Espedito mi ha il resto alle mie spese."

Vide the Satire addressed to his cousin Annibal Malcgucci.

This was a business which he thought he knew;
Alas! he found he didn't know a bit of it;
Nothing went right, slave as he might, and stew;
And yet he never, somehow, could get quit of it;
The more he did, the more he had to do;
Desk, shelves, hands, arms, whatever could admit of it,
Were always stuff'd with letters and with dockets,
Turning his brains, and bulging out his pockets.

Luckless in all, perhaps not worth his hire,
He even miss'd the few official sweets;
Some petty tithes assign'd him did but tire
His patience; *nil* was always on their sheets.
Now 'twas bad harvests, now a flood, now fire,
Now dev'l himself, that hinder'd his receipts.
There were some fees his due;—God knows, not many;
No matter;—never did he touch a penny.

The man, for all that, was a happy man;
Thought not too much; indulg'd no gloomy fit.
Folks wish'd him well. Prince, peasant, artisan,
Every one lov'd him; for the rogue had wit,
And knew how to amuse. His fancy ran
On thousands of odd things, on which he writ

Certain mad waggeries in the shape of poems,
With strange elaborations of their proems.*

Choleric he was withal, when fools reprov'd him;
Free of his tongue, as he was frank of heart;
Ambition, avarice, neither of them mov'd him;
True to his word; caressing without art;
A lover to excess of those that lov'd him;
Yet if he met with hate, could play a part
Which show'd the fiercest he had found his mate;
Still he was proner far to love than hate.

In person he was big, yet tight and lean,
Had long, thin legs, big nose, and a large face;
Eyebrows which there was little space between;
Deep-set, blue eyes; and beard in such good case,
That the poor eyes would scarcely have been seen,
Had it been suffer'd to forget its place;
But not approving beards to that amount,
The owner brought it to a sharp account.

But of all things, all servitude loath'd he;
Why then should fate have wound him in its bands?

* Berni introduced a fashion among the wits of writing on the most unpromising subjects, and showing how much could be made out of them. Among his themes were "Praises of being in Debt," "Of the Plague," &c.

Freedom seem'd made for him, yet strange to see,
His lot was always in another's hands;
His! who had always thirsted instantly
To disobey commands, because commands!
Left to his own free will, the man was glad
To further yours. Command him, he went mad.

Yet field-sports, dice, cards, balls, and such like courses,
Things which he might be thought to set store by,
Gave him but little pleasure. He liked horses;
But was content to let them please his eye,
Buying them squaring not with his resources;
Therefore his *summum bonum* was to lie
Stretch'd at full length;—yea, frankly be it said,
To do no single thing but lie in bed.

'Twas owing all to that infernal writing.
Body and brain had borne such grievous rounds
Of kicks, cuffs, floors, from copying and inditing,
That he could find no balsam for his wounds,
No harbour for his wreck, half so inviting
As to lie still, far from all sights and sounds,
And so, in bed, do nothing on God's earth,
But try and give his senses a new birth.

Bed, bed's the thing, by Heav'n! (thus would he swear)
Bed is your only work; your only duty.
Bed is one's gown, one's slippers, one's arm-chair,
Old coat; you're not afraid to spoil its beauty.
Large you may have it, long, wide, brown, or fair,
Down-bed or mattress, just as it may suit ye;
Then take your clothes off, turn in, stretch, lie double;
Be but in bed, you're quit of earthly trouble.

Borne to the fairy palace then, but tir'd
Of seeing so much dancing, he withdrew
Into a distant room, and there desir'd
A bed might be set up, handsome and new,
With all the comforts that the case requir'd—
Mattresses huge, and pillows not a few,
Put here and there, in order that no ease
Might be found wanting to cheeks, arms, or knees.

The bed was eight feet wide, lovely to see,
With white sheets, and fine curtains, and rich loops,
Things vastly soothing to calamity;
The coverlet hung light in silken droops:
It might have held six people easily,
But he dislik'd to lie in bed by groups.
A large bed to himself;—*that* was his notion;
With room enough to swim in, like the ocean.

In this retreat there join'd him a good soul,
A Frenchman, one who had been long at court,
An admirable cook; though, on the whole,
His gains of his deserts had fallen short.
For him was made, cheek, as it were, by jowl,
A second bed of the same noble sort,
Yet not so close, but that the folks were able
To set between the two a dinner-table.

Here was serv'd up, on snow-white table-cloths,
Every the daintiest possible comestible
In the French taste (all others being Goths),
Dishes alike delightful and digestible;
Only our scribe chose syrups, soups, and broths,
The smallest trouble being a detestable
Bore, into which not ev'n his dinner led him;
Therefore the servants always came, and fed him.

Nothing at these times but his head was seen;
The coverlet came close beneath his chin;
And then, from out the bottle or tureen,
They fill'd a silver pipe, which he let in
Between his lips, all easy, smooth, and clean,
And so he fill'd his philosophic skin:
For not a finger all the while he stirr'd;
Nor, lest his tongue should tire, scarce utter'd word.

The name of that same cook was Master Pierre:*
He told a tale well, something short and light.
Quoth scribe, "Those people that keep dancing there,
Have little wit." Quoth Pierre, "You're very right."
And then he told a tale, or humm'd an air;
Then took a sup of something, or a bite;
And then he turn'd himself to sleep; and then
Awoke and ate; and then he slept again.

This was their mode of living, day by day;
'Twixt food and sleep their moments softly spun;
They took no note of time and tide, not they;
Feast, fast, or working-day, they held all one;
Never disputed one another's say;
Never heard bell, never were told of dun.
It was particularly understood,
No news was to be brought them, bad or good.

* He is called Maestro Pier, and Piero Buffetto (Buffet), in Berni's Miscellaneous Poems, and appears to have been well known. Our author, besides other pieces, addressed to him one in praise of Aristotle, in which he laments, that the great philosopher, among the other marvels of his genius, had not benefited mankind with a treatise on cookery.

"Oh Dio, che crudeltà! che non compose
Un operetta sopra la cucina
Tra l'infinite sue miracolose."

Good God! how cruel in him not to write
Some little work concerning cookery,
'Mongst all the wonders of his thoughtful might!

But, above all, no writing was known there,
No pen and ink, no pounce-box. Oh, my God!
Like toads and snakes we shunn'd 'em; like despair,
Like death, like judgment, like a fiery rod;
So green the wounds, so dire the memories were,
Left by that rack of ten long years and odd,
Which tore out of his very life and senses
The most undone of all amanuenses.

One more thing I may note, that made the day
Pass well; one custom, not a little healing;
Which was, to look above us, as we lay,
And count the spots and blotches in the ceiling:
Noting what shapes they took to, and which way,
And where the plaster threaten'd to be peeling;
Whether the spot look'd new, or old, or what;
Or whether 'twas, in fact, a spot or not.*

* Such readers of Italian as possess Berni's *Orlando Innamorato*, may possibly observe, that in this last stanza I have departed a little from the original; blotches and spots in ceilings being things less difficult to conceive in the houses of modern European gentry than the beams and rafters of those in the time of the poet. I have modified a sentence or two in Ariosto for a different reason.

THE CURATE AND HIS BISHOP.

FROM THE FRENCH. WRITTEN DURING THE OLD REGIME.*

On business call'd from his abode,
A curate jogg'd along the road.
In patient leanness jogg'd his mare;
The curate, jogging, breath'd a prayer;
And jogging as she fac'd the meads,
His maid, behind him, told her beads.

They hear a carriage; it o'ertakes 'em;
With grinding noise and dust it rakes 'em;
'Tis he himself! they know his port;
My Lord the Bishop, bound to court.
Beside him, to help meditation,
The lady sits, his young relation.

The carriage stops! the curate doffs
His hat, and bows; the lady coughs:
The prelate bends his lordly eyes,
And "How now, sir!" in wrath he cries;

* I have forgotten the name of the author from whom I translated this *jeu d'esprit.*

"What! choose the very King's highway,
And ride with girls in open day!
Good heav'ns! what next will curates do?
My fancy shudders at the view.—
Girl, cover up your horrid stocking:
Was ever seen a group so shocking!"

"My Lord," replies the blushing man,
"Pardon me, pray, and pardon Anne;
Oh deem it, good my lord, no sin:
I had no coach to put her in."

THE BATTLE OF THE BOOKS.

FROM THE LUTRIN OF BOILEAU.

THE subject of the *Lutrin* (*the Lectern*, or *Reading Desk*) is a dispute between the Chanter and Treasurer (or Dean) of a Cathedral Chapel in Paris, respecting the right of having a desk of that description in the Choir, and of giving the benediction. If the Chanter can succeed in publicly giving the benediction to the Dean himself, he thinks he shall establish that privilege without further trouble: on the other hand, if the Dean can get the start of him, and bless the Chanter, his predominance is secured for ever.

Luckily for the Dean, whenever he and the Chanter are together, and a multitude assembled, he enjoys, from prescription, the greater influence; and how he gains his end accordingly, is set forth in the ensuing Battle of the Books, which is the original of Swift's prose satire. Boileau is quite at home in it. It gives him an opportunity, as Warton observes, of indulging in his favourite pastime of ridiculing bad authors. This perhaps is the liveliest and most inventive passage in all the *Lutrin;* and it may be fairly pitted against the Battle of the Beaux and Ladies in the *Rape of the Lock*, being at once more satirical, probable, and full of life. If Pope's mock-heroic excels in delicacy and fancy (which I cannot but think it does, out and out), Boileau's may lay claim to a jollier and robuster spirit of ridicule, and to a greater portion of what the French call *movement.*

MEANWHILE the Canons, far from all this noise,
With rapid mouthfuls urge the hungry joys:

With flowing cups and irritating salt,
Their thirst by turns they lay and they exalt:
Fervent they feed, with palate and with eye;
Through all its caverns gapes a monstrous ven'son pie.

To these Fame comes, and hastens to relate
The law consulted and the threaten'd fate:
Up starts the chief, and cries "Consult we too!"
With bile and claret strove his sudden hue.
Groans Everard from the board untimely torn,
But far away among the rest is borne.

A short and secret passage knew the band;
Through this they ruffle, and soon reach the stand,
Where Barbin, bookseller of equal eye,
Sells good and bad to all who choose to buy.
Proud up the platform mount the valiant train
Making loud way, when lo! so fates ordain,
As proud, and loud, and close at hand are seen
The fervid squadron, headed by the Dean.
The chiefs approaching, show a turbid grace;
They measure with their eyes, they fume, they face;
And, had they hoofs, had paw'd upon the place.

Thus two proud bulls, whom equal flames surprise
For some fair heifer with her Juno's eyes,

Forget their pasture, meet with horrid bows,
And stooping, threaten with their stormy brows.

But the sad Everard, elbow'd as he pass'd,
No longer could endure his demi-fast.
Plung'd in the shop, he seizes on a book,
A "Cyrus"* (lucky in the first he took),
And aiming at the man (Boirude was he)
Launch'd at his head the chaste enormity.
Boirude evaded, graz'd in cheek alone,
But Sidrac's stomach felt it with a groan.
Punch'd by the dire "Artamenes," he fell
At the dean's feet, and lay incapable.
His troop believe him dead, and with a start
Feel their own stomachs for the wounded part.

But rage and fear alike now rouse their gall,
And twenty champions on the murd'rer fall.
The Canons, to support the shock, advance:
On every side ferments the direful dance;
Then Discord gives a roar, loud as when meet
Two herds of rival graziers in a street.

* *Artamenes, or the Grand Cyrus*, written by Mademoiselle Scuderi. The books mentioned in this battle are either obsolete French works, or sorry productions of the author's contemporaries.

The bookseller was out, the troops rush in,
Fast fly his quartos, his octavos spin.
On Everard most they fall as thick as hail,
As when in spring the stony showers prevail,
And beat the blossoms till the season fail.
All arm them as they can: one gives a scotch
With "Love's Decrée;" another, with the "Watch;"
This a French "Tasso" flings, a harmless wound,
And that the only "Jonas" ever bound.
The boy of Barbin vainly interferes,
And thrusts amidst the fray his generous ears:
Within, without, the books fly o'er and o'er,
Seek the dipp'd heads, and thump the dusty floor,
And strew the wondering platform at the door.
Here, with Guarini, Terence lies; and there
Jostles with Xenophon the fop La Serre.
Oh what unheard-of books, what great unknowns,
Quitted that day their dusty garrisons!
You, "Almerinde and Simander," mighty twins,
Were there, tremendous in your ancient skins:
And you, most hidden "Caloander," saw
The light for once, drawn forth by Gaillerbois.
Doubtful of blood, each handles his brain-pan:
On every chair there lies a clergyman.
A critical "Le Vayer" hits Giraut
Just where a reader yawns, and lays him low.

Marin, who thought himself translator proof,
On his right shoulder feels a dire Brebeuf;
The weary pang pervades his arm; he frowns,
And damns the "Lucan" dear to country towns.
Poor Dodillon, with senses render'd thick
By a "Pinchêne" in quarto, rises sick;
Then walks away. Him scorn'd in vain Garagne,
Smitten in forehead by a "Charlemagne:"
O wonderful effect of sacred verse!
The warrior slumbers where he meant to curse.
Great glory with a "Clelia," Bloc obtain'd;
Ten times he threw it, and ten times regain'd.

But nought, Fabri, withstood thy bulky Mars,
Thou Canon, nurs'd in all the church's wars.
Big was Fabri, big bon'd, a large divine;
No water knew his elemental wine.
By him both Gronde and Gourme were overthrown,
And tenor Gras, and Gros the barytone,
And Gervis, bad except in easy parts,
And Gigue, whose alto touch'd the ladies' hearts.

At last the Singers, turning one and all,
Fly to regain the loop-holes of the Hall:
So fly from a grey wolf, with sudden sweep,
The bleating terrors of a flock of sheep;

Or thus, o'erborne by the Pelidean powers,
The Trojans turning sought their windy towers.
Brontin beheld, and thus address'd Boirude:
"Illustrious carrier of the sacred wood,*
Thou, who one step didst never yet give way,
Huge as the burthen was, and hot the day;
Say, shall we look on this inglorious scene,
And bear a Canon conquering a Dean?
And shall our children's children have it said,
The rochet's dignity, through us, fell dead?
Ah, no; disabled though I thus recline,
A carcase still, and a Quinaut, are mine;
Accept the covert of my bulk, and aim;
A blow may crown thee with a David's fame."
He said,—and tended him the gentle book;
With ardour in his eyes the sexton took,
Then lurk'd, then aim'd, and right between the eyes
Hit the great athlete, to his dumb surprise.
O feeble storm! O bullet, not of lead!
The book, like butter, dumps against his head.
With scorn the Canon chafed: "Now mark," said he,
"Ye secret couple, base and cowardly;
See if this arm consents against the foe
To launch a book, that softens in the blow."

* The large crucifix in processions.

He said; and on an old Infortiat seiz'd,*
In distant ages much by lawyers greas'd,—
A huge black-letter mass, whose mighty hoards
More mighty look'd, bound in two ponderous boards.
Half sides of old black parchment wooed the grasp,
And from three nails there hung the remnant of a clasp.
To heave it on its shelf, among the I's,
Would take three students of the common size.
The Canon, nathless, rais'd it to his head,
And on the pair, now crouching and half dead,
Sent with both hands the wooden thunder down:
The two warriors, clashing in the crown,
[illegible] and undone with oak and nails,
Roll from the platform roll, and seek the guttery vales.

The Dean, astonish'd at a fall so dire,
Utters a cry as when the punch'd expire.
He curses in his heart all devilish broils,
And making awful room, six steps recoils.

* "Infortiat (law, the second part of the digest) Infortiatum." Dufief's *French-English Dictionary*. Enforcement? It appears to have been the ecclesiastical portion of the General Body of Jurisprudence—*Canon* Law. If so, there is much wit in the recourse had by the Canon to this compulsory folio.

Not long:—for now all eyes encountering his,
To see how Deans endure calamities,
Like a great chief he makes no further stand,
But drawing from his cloak his good right hand,
And stretching meek the sacred fingers twain,
Goes blessing all around him, might and main.
He knows full well, not only that the foe
Once smitten thus, can neither stand nor go,
But that the public sense of their defeat
Must leave him lord, in church as well as street.
The crowd already on his side he sees;
The cry is heresy, "Profane ones, on your knees:"
The Chanter, who beheld the stroke from far,
In vain seeks courage for a sacred war:
His heart abandons him: he yields [illegible]
His soldiers follow with bewilder'd eyes:
All fly, all fear, but none escape the pain;
The conq'ring fingers follow and detain.
Everard alone, upon a book employ'd,
Had hoped the sacred insult to avoid;
But the wise chief, keeping a side-long eye,
And feigning to the right to pass him by,
Suddenly turn'd, and facing him in van,
Beyond redemption bless'd th' unhappy man.
The man, confounded with the mortal stroke,
From his long vision of rebellion woke,

Fell on his knees in penitential wise,
And gave decorum what he owed the skies.

Home trod the Dean victorious, and ordain'd
The resurrection of the desk regain'd:
While the vain Chapter, with its fallen crest,
Slunk to its several musings, *lost* and *bless'd*.

THE END.

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